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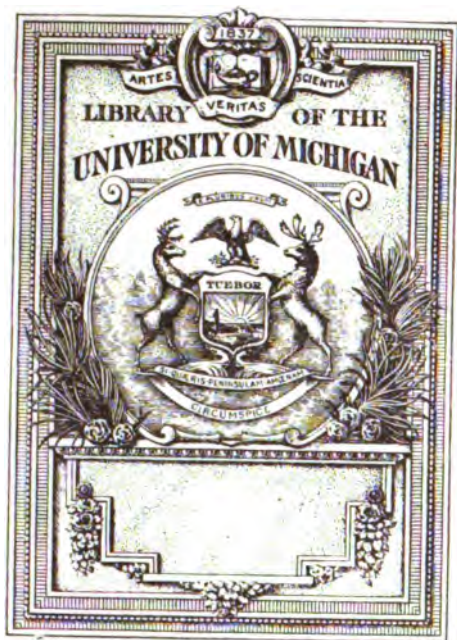
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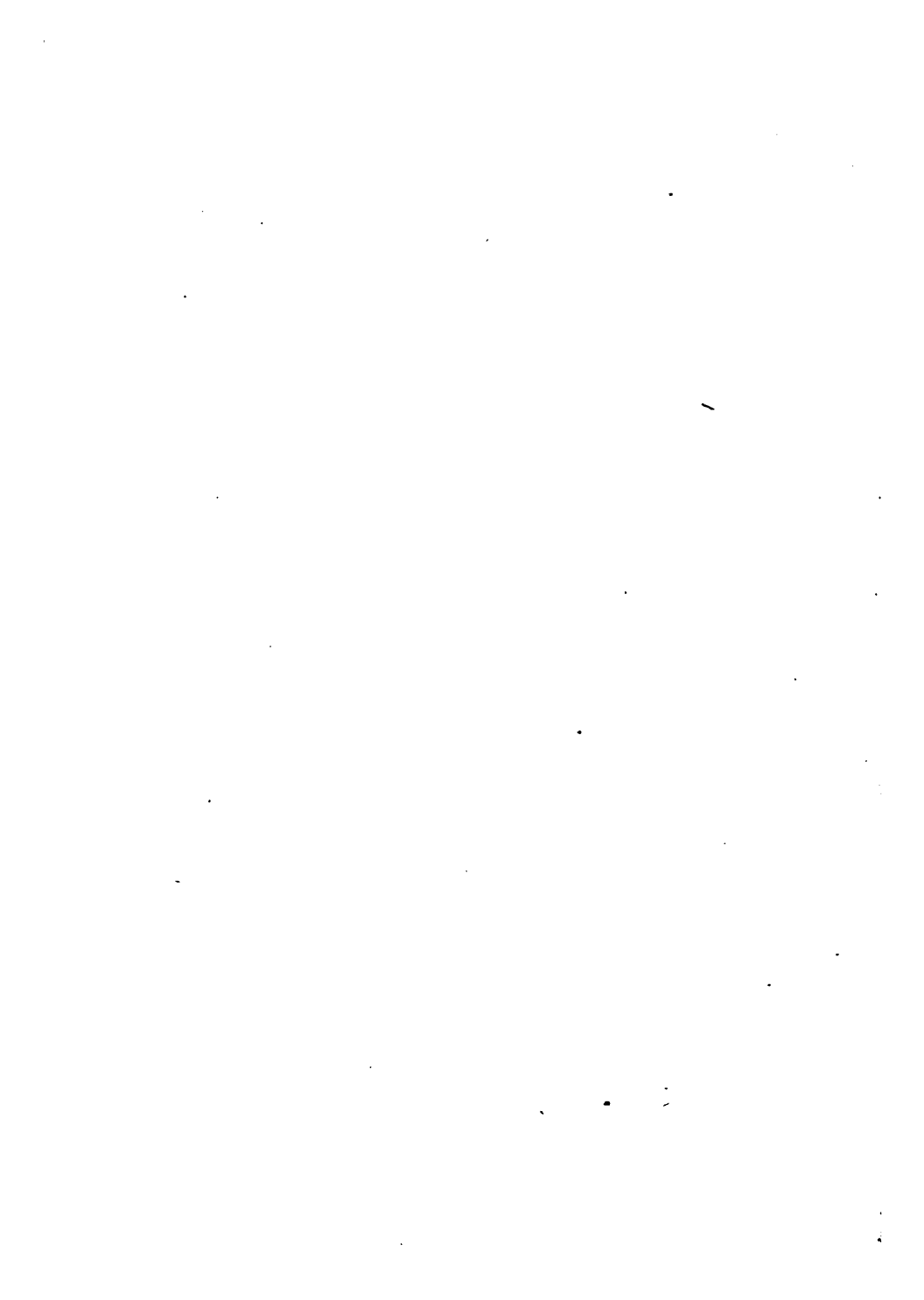
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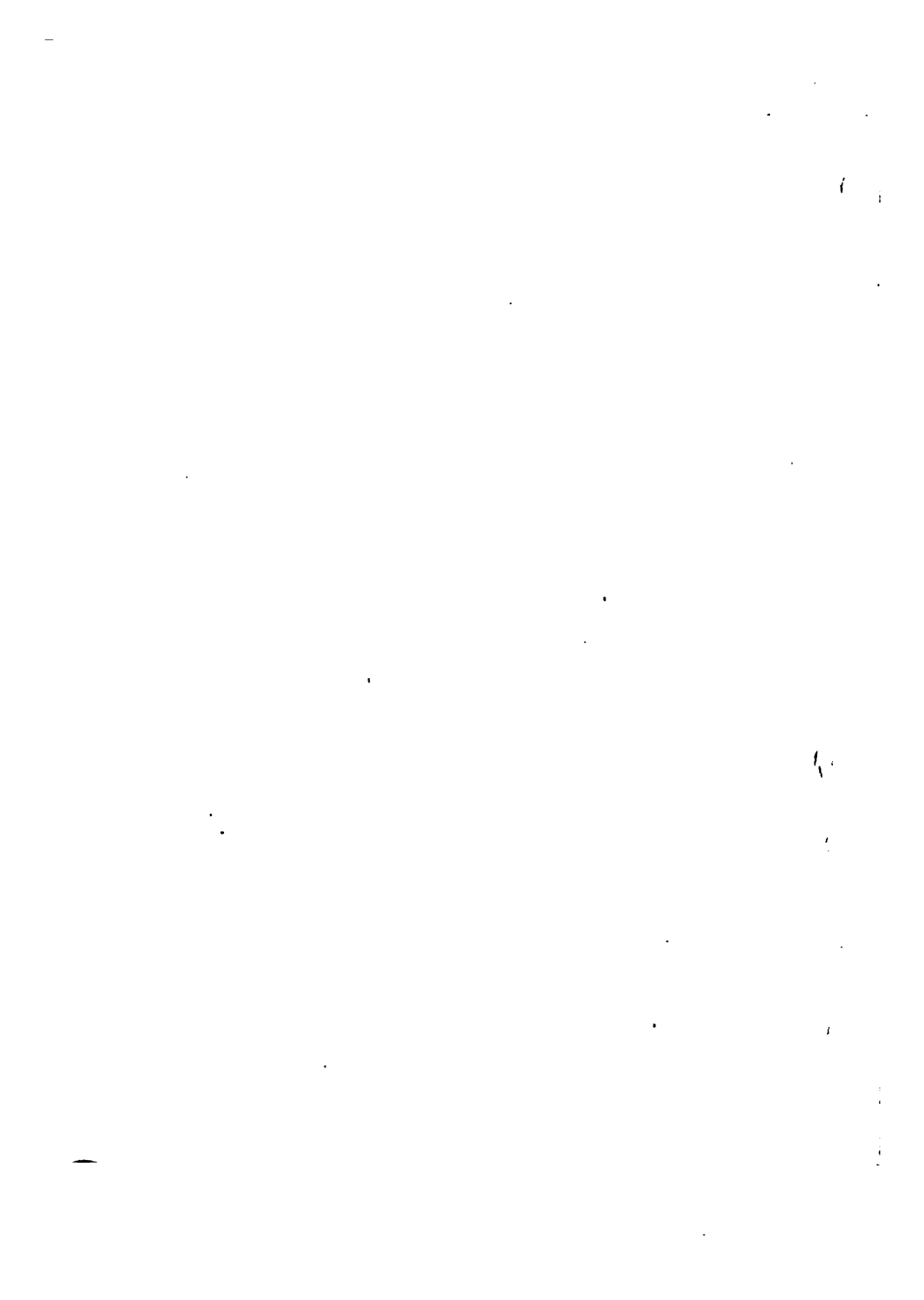




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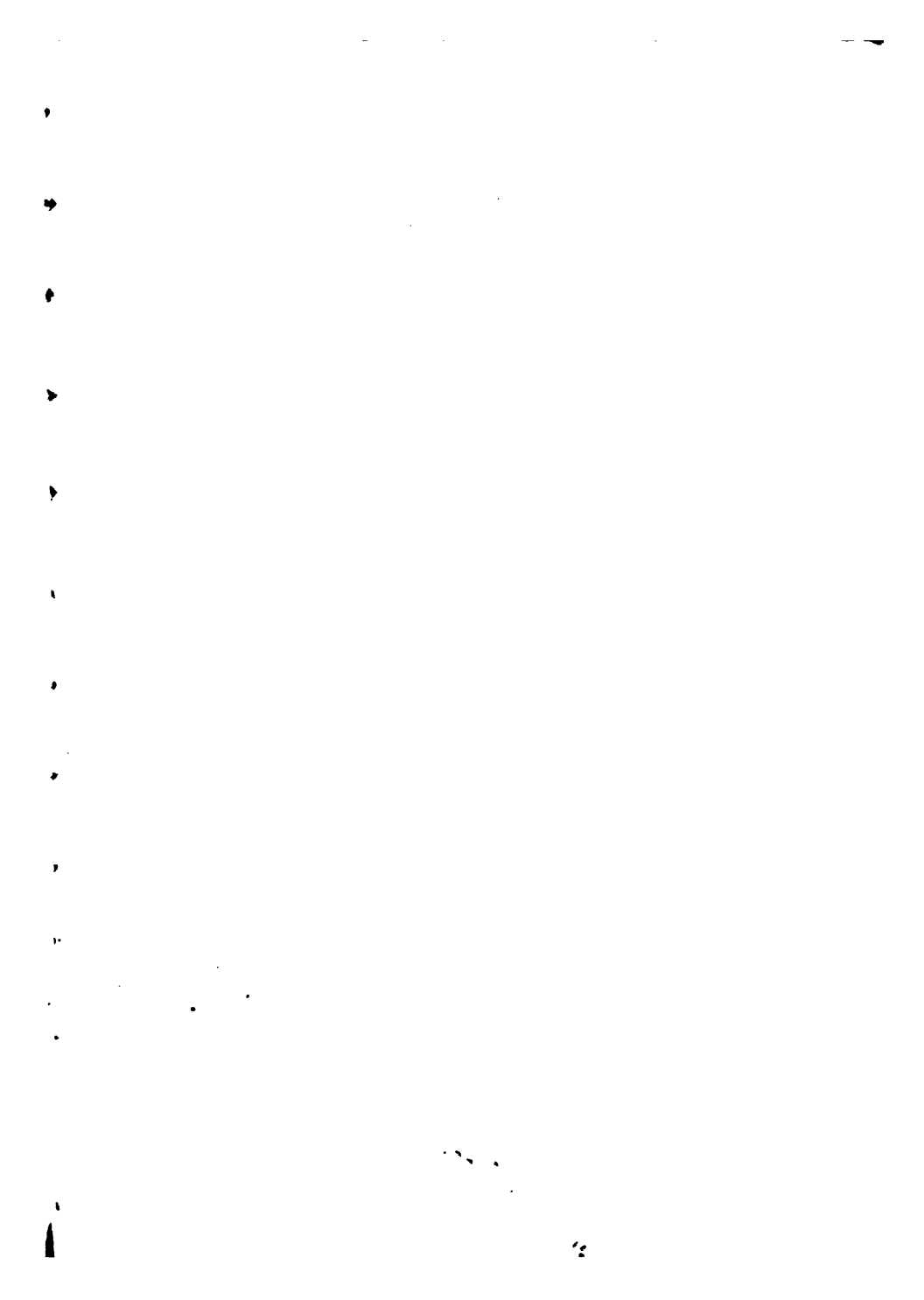


THE WOMAN ERRANT



THE WOMAN ERRANT

The  Co.





“Springing up, she seized the lamp and . . . stared at her image in the glass.”

See p. 247.

THE WOMAN ERRANT

BEING SOME CHAPTERS FROM THE
WONDER BOOK OF BARBARA

THE COMMUTER'S WIFE

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILL GREFFÉ*

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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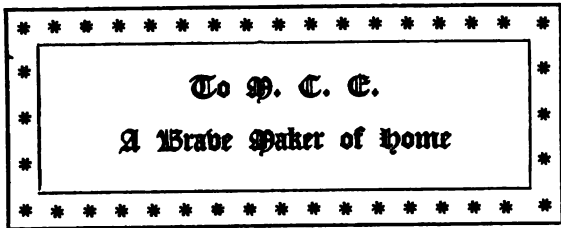
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Meditation

Now came the Woman-errant, widow, wife, maid, afoot or proudly mounted. Driven by necessity forth to victual the lone castle, or oft-times spurred on, like errant knight whose gage is self, by very lust of mobing.

Yet as she pushed onward through the market-place, or entered the lists to probe her prowess, as if her worth gave right, if any chanced to jostle or blows rained hot, straightway she cried aloud, "Give place, for I am woman!"

Then man, being man, yielded his right to the spell-womanly, potent through all disguise, and e'en applauded her, oft to his own abasement.

— The Prophecy of Malde.



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ILLUSTRATIONS

“ Springing up, she seized the lamp and . . . stared
at her image in the glass ” (p. 247) . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

“ For a minute I couldn’t make the picture out ” . 156

“ At that moment the door flew open and Neil Gor-
don dashed in ” 252

“ There they sat, side by side, . . . I *think* they had
been holding hands ” 304

“ ‘ What is it ? ’ asked the rider ” 346

“ She stood in the low, broad hallway, gazing about
half satisfied, half perplexed ” 364

THE PEOPLE

- BARBARA.** A typical American woman, living in the country, and wife of Evan the Commuter. Also Keeper of the Garden, Experience, and Wonder Book.
- EVAN.** The Commuter. A transplanted Englishman of decided ideas. Landscape architect by profession. In business in New York.
- IAN and RICHARD.** Twin sons of Evan and Barbara.
- DR. RICHARD RUSSELL.** Father of Barbara. A country physician of culture and experience, also a bookworm.
- MARTHA CORKLE.** Once housekeeper in Evan's family, now wife of Timothy Saunders, Dr. Russell's Scotch factotum.
- AUNT LOT.** (So called from her tendency to look backward.) Dr. Russell's sister. Married late in life to Rev. Jabez Crandon.
- REV. JABEZ CRANDON.** A Methodist minister of many parishes.
- SUKEY.** A domestic woman with ideas. }
JANE. } His daughters.
LOIS. }
- MARTIN CORTRIGHT.** Knickerbocker and antiquarian.
- LAVINIA.** His wife. A New York gentlewoman of the old school still living in Greenwich Village.
- MRS. JENKS-SMITH** (called Lady of the Bluffs, from her showy country-seat). A newly rich woman with a big heart.
- HORACE BRADFORD.** Country born, but now Professor of Literature at Rockcliffe University.
- MRS. BRADFORD.** His mother. Still living at the farm and raising poultry.
- SYLVIA.** His wife (whose mother, a New York society woman, has been divorced and remarried).
- CARHART LATHAM.** Sylvia's brother.
- NEIL GORDON.** Literary editor of the *Morning Despatch*.
- IVORY STEELE** (his assistant). A woman errant.
- DR. JOHN ROBERTS.** Betrothed to Ivory Steele.

TIME. The Present.

SCENES. — A country place in southern New England; Seneca, a provincial town; and New York city.

The Woman Errant

I

CONCERNING DUST AND DISHES

Book-dusting Week: First Morning. I wonder why women often take so much trouble to be unhappy, when to be otherwise is far easier? Also, why is it that a face, seen only once by chance and with no striking claim to attention, will haunt one aggressively?

Such a nameless face has been with me since the holiday season, when Evan and I spent a few days in New York, together with Sylvia and Horace Bradford, at the Cortrights'.

It was in leaving a studio concert that some draperies divided our party in the narrow hallway, Horace being a few steps behind. An exclamation from him made me turn, and in the swift half glance I saw the dusky-robed figure of a young woman outlined against the crimson curtains, that threw the contrasting ivory-white of face, neck,

and arms into bold relief. Even her hair was of that dense cloudy quality that, instead of curving and wreathing the face, hung in elf locks like flakes of soot before the ears, casting shadows along the jaw curve.

Then the crowd bore me in the opposite direction, and I could only partly hear Bradford's eager question:—

"But I live in New York," replied a low distinct voice, so carefully modulated that not a spark of spontaneity remained in it.

"Then your family has left Seneca?"

"No, on the contrary, they have recently built a monstrosously new house there."

"Are you— are you here alone? Do you like it? You should know the Cortrights. How is Dr. Roberts?" he persisted with clumsy anxiety.

"I suppose it is called 'being alone,'" she said, "though to me it is far less so than in living among people with whom one has not a sympathy in common. At least it is a new experience, and what else does one ask of life? Dr. Roberts? I've not seen him for half a year. You see, Professor Bradford, I am one of those women who, from choice, not necessity, has broken away to earn my independence. I am—" here the soft voice hesitated deliberately for a word.

"A woman errant?" said Bradford. Then the crowd swallowed me up, and the wretched little cramped elevator groaned and squeaked so in its descent that I had no opportunity of speaking to Bradford, and the occurrence passed from my mind. Last night, however, the face returned with my dreams, looking at me from my bedroom draperies, and I remembered that the eyes under the sooty lashes were of a deep topaz colour, with a sort of hypnotic power of dilating and emitting waves of fascination that included me in their circle. I must ask her name when I write to Sylvia. Pussy Gray, the beloved cat of my youth, had just such eyes. He was of the brindled-tiger, out-door variety, sacred to barn and haymow, from whence I brought him when a kitten, fed and pampered him until he grew fat as a badger,—even made clothes for him,—and, using him for a doll, brought on his downfall by consumption, through interfering with the status in the world that Nature had given him. It was only last summer, that the boys found his tombstone, that father patiently made me from an old slate, down in the meadow, and they were so impressed by the story that they immediately stopped trying to make their Belgian hare wear a harness and walk, instead of hopping about in freedom.

•

Alack! what have these queries and reflections to do with the date *Book-dusting Week*? Nothing, save that the period is one wherein the contents of the wonder book of the mind often crystallizes into the question direct, quite beyond the range of my Familiar Spirit who hobnobs with me at such times. A Garden Book is primarily the record of the enthusiasms of youth, of the dawn of experience, to which the Experience Book itself is the sequel. But of all the books of life wherein we keep record of our pilgrimage the Wonder Book is the one that is never closed.

As to this particular time of the year you will search vainly in the almanacs, for it belongs to neither of the four seasons,—spring, summer, autumn, or winter,—but is a fifth, not recognized as such by mathematicians, and, except as a month, belonging to my calendar alone according to my needs.

In pulsing spring an out-door woman has no time for dusting books, with everything beckoning outside, from the first soft clouds in the sky down to the little plants coming up from the ground in such a hurry that half the time they wear their seed nightcaps as if awakened half prepared, yet not daring to disobey orders.

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In summer and splendid autumn she has no inclination. In winter when Nature turns her cold shoulders petulantly the Garden of Books stretches out its arms to comfort her,— shall she repulse it with a feather duster? When then is the fifth season? Listen and I will tell you!

When for months the leafless tree branches, in every tint of gray and dun, have stood in sharp relief against the sky, the evergreens have exhausted their wardrobe of snow draperies, and the earth has either been completely hidden or lies black and sodden, there comes a day that is wholly unlike all the other days that, strung in symbolic groups, like black and white beads upon the golden thread of hope, make up the rosary of winter.

At a casual glance this day is precisely like those that come before or follow it, save that perhaps the wind has a moister breath and the sun penetrates unaccustomed corners; but to me there is all the difference in the world.

Yesterday the earth was as the face of the beloved one, stern and motionless in sleep. To-day the eyes are open, and even though they will close again I see in them the consciousness that comes before the full smile of recognition.

Yesterday patches of worn and glassy snow-crust stretched between the groping root fingers of the great swamp maple above the pond. To-day the blood is rising to its branches, banishing the winter pallor, the snow as a little rivulet flows pondward, while the gnarled roots enclose the first green grass tuft, an emerald in rough setting.

Then the air so long empty of real song is filled with gentle murmurs,—some chickadees are bathing in a thaw pool; a song sparrow, faithful to his post, is singing in the alders, but his courage will soon be checked, his claws feel cold, and he may be put to it for rations before he can safely start his housekeeping. Not yet, little brown' friend of the cheerful heart; we are listening to siren voices, you and I, for the peeping frogs have not made their first announcement, and there is still time for ice, snow, and hope deferred. But come what may the heart cannot sicken when spring hope is born, for it is the first of March, and every good gardener's calendar should be divided into spring, summer, autumn, winter, and *March*,—the fifth season of the New England year,—in which, though one may often remark on the beauty of the weather overhead, much time must be spent in the washing of rubbers.

CONCERNING DUST AND DISHES 7

At this season, too, the night heavens wear their signs differently set from where the stars mapped them these three months past. The first week in March I see from my bedroom window the winter constellations trudging down the sky toward the southwest horizon, Taurus leading the troop, Orion following, sturdily upright for the time, with Rigel, the sparkling star-buckle of his left shoe poised firmly above the sun-dial, while Canis Major, scanning him with a glowing eye, follows to heel, and the coy Pleiad sisters vanish backward direct through space. While remote from these in the high northern sky the dipper, reversed and empty all the frosty time, now slowly rights itself.

So then at this period comes book dusting, and why? First because of a necessity it must be done thoroughly once a year, and the dust is symbol of the lenten ashes of discipline, whereby I hope to deserve spring; secondly, it is only by some such deliberate physical task that I can restrain the impatience that stirs my blood to the fever point between the promise and the absolute fulfilment of spring.

The heart says, "Go out, uncover, prune, plant,"—the head says, "Wait," and so I do, having sometimes disastrously done otherwise, to the garden's anguish;

but at least this waiting has taught me to sympathize with the boys and the restless hour when baking and cooling separate the delectable pleasures of cutting out and eating, when of a stormy Saturday Martha Corkle has come down to make them seed-cakes.

The first morning of book-dusting week is the most trying, not only because the work lies all ahead, but because I always begin with the long case of old cyclopædias and medical reference books at the end of father's study. If these were not done in the first flush of virtue, their venerable heads would grow hoary indeed. While my hands are at work on this shelf, I am very apt to let my head wander all over past, present, and future. You see there is no possibility of obtaining refreshment by a peep inside their covers, as in the real live books that inhabit the apartment houses on the other three sides of the room.

Every season when I begin, I ponder on the dead wood in this Garden of Books, and beg father to prune it. He readily assents and then stays his hand. After all how can I, even from my sympathetic viewpoint, tell exactly what these dingy, poorly printed volumes may mean to him?

An outsider in entering my garden would doubtless

condemn many an old shrub of straggling growth or rose well advanced in briery wood (the first rose whose fragrance I remember), as cumberers of the ground, but they are to me ever the haunt of brown thrasher, catbird, yellowthroat, and chewink,—those unmistakable birds whose names I learned sitting with mother under her tree, so long ago that I could scarce pronounce them squarely. May it not be then that those derelicts in father's book garden have voices and perfumes that speak equally of turning-points?

The dusting of the study occupies three mornings and our den two, while the sixth is set apart for the shampooing of the hair and soaking the hands of the toiler. Lavinia Cortright dusting books, clad in muslin apron, dainty washable gloves, with a bit of lace protecting her hair, and skirt tucked up, makes a picture scarcely less charming than *La Belle Chocolatière*, but at such times as dusting and planting I show my affinity for the soil and am of the earth *earthy*; in fact I never can seem to get in sympathetic touch with anything that I cannot, as it were, meet flesh to flesh.

It is twenty years since father first intrusted this work to me, for I was fourteen when I began. Now I am thirty-four and the boys are nearly eight, fully

fitted with new front teeth, and entered in the public school for their good as citizens, thus marking the second period in their careers,—the period when the mother has to respect budding manhood, and be careful about hugging them in public, perfect liberty to do this having passed into privacy with the cutting of their long locks and the shedding of those first teeth whose coming was such an event. However, nothing is wasted, but simply pent up for the bedtime overflow of confidences and the triple bidding of good night—once at the bedside with a bear's hug, once in the doorway with a blown kiss, and lastly a call, "Good night," from the entrance to the den with the assurance that the door is well ajar. I know that the modern woman with a club license to teach the care of children (or rather its substitutes) via the papers does not approve of this, but is not love the truest training and the remembrance of it the best discipline for later years? There is not a night but that I can close my eyes and hear mother's voice say at the door, when after my prayers father had kissed my toes between the crib bars, "Are you comfortable?" Then midway the stairs, "Are you very comfortable?" and at the study door, "Good sleep." Yet this was thirty years ago!

The social and educational fads of one day are

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the errors of the next, but the magnetic clasp of a mother's arms has lasted since the world's dawn and will endure beyond its setting to eternity.

Thirty-four is really a serious age, a time when certain past experiences and future wonderments meet in a spirit of comparison and analysis, and one knows and separates the things that are worth while from the things that are not. Life was so simple and direct with just father and Evan to measure by that everything seemed worth while until the Whirlpoolers came to the Bluffs. Then the complications of events and new friendships added their life currents to ours, until somehow, without a visible change, I am everywhere conscious of the tugging of an undertow.

My life has always been of men,—with father, Evan, the boys, old Timothy Saunders,—and of the open. The undertow is born of woman, whom I have seemingly but recently discovered in all her might; and the complexity and subtlety that surround her are like the sweeping tangle of sea-grass and weeds that mesh the feet of the swimmer.

This morning I began my work with a handicap. For the last year I have noticed that, allowing for the boys, it has taken the maids a great deal longer to do their allotted tasks than it used in Martha Corkle's time, though the work was apparently the same; and

I began to wonder if Effie was tiring of her nine years of service, or was ill, for I noticed that she propped herself up by the serving table whenever she could during dinner, and the dish washing was long drawn out after every meal. Quite recently, when I mentioned the fact in Evan's hearing, he promptly quenched me by saying, "Count the dishes. In an office that is run properly, as business increases the staff must be added to or else the heads divide the extra work among themselves," — which fact set me to thinking.

Yesterday, Effie being seized with a toothache, I told her to go to town early this morning and that I would attend to her breakfast dishes. I did, and ten o'clock found me seated on the top step of the ladder, facing the cyclopædias, with the duster held idly between my hands, fatigue in my limbs, and extreme wonder in my brain.

Our breakfast was certainly simple enough, — fruit, a cereal, broiled chops, and creamed potatoes, rolls, with coffee for the elders and cocoa for the boys, five people in all, and yet I had removed from that table, washed or put away, one hundred and twenty articles, not counting the table-cloth and napkins! Over three hundred table utensils to wash every day! No wonder Effie is tired when night

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comes and props herself up by anything that is near!
How came it to be?

In Aunt Lot's day we had but one maid and there were father, Aunt Lot, and I; now we are five and the maids three! A vision steals over me of the table, neatly spread with the necessities, but no little plates within big plates or frills of any kind save the flowers in the centre. Beside Aunt Lot, on a small serving table, was the egg boiler with its spirit lamp and the fruit, all close at hand. We served each other, and afterward the general maid gathered the dishes in the pantry, where Aunt Lot washed them in a little cedar tub of foamy suds, polished each article, and set it in its place. I used to wonder why she did it, — going out after breakfast was so much pleasanter, — but if you do not occasionally gauge work of any kind from the inside, how judge of either quality or quantity?

I cannot realize exactly how the increase came, for father and Evan both dislike table fuss and feathers. Yes, it was a year after we returned and after Martha Corkle's marriage to Crumpled Tim, that Evan's senior partner and his wife came to visit us. She had lived in hotels and was accustomed to every luxury, and I foolishly elaborated our habits as to waiting and dishes. It was the entering wedge,

and it has never been quite withdrawn, silly that I was. I wonder why women, all being nominally of the same sex, should exert the strange effect they do upon each other?

Between all these considerations I only dusted the contents of two shelves in an hour. The simple life seemed the one consideration. But how to lead a simple and yet not mussy life? I am convinced that it is the *life mussy* that very largely passes current for the simple life, for very few I think have the courage to live the latter, which in its essence also means to live adequately.

Lavinia Cortright used to talk a great deal about one of their friends, a cultured woman of middle age and ideals, who married an artist. That his art atmosphere and living need not be deranged, she insisted upon taking up her abode in his studio suite. One day last spring we went there to tea. The man's art was good, but alas for the simple life! The apartments were large and everything, even the air, had the most antique flavor, but in carelessly jostling a tapestry screen, I could not avoid seeing the unmade, folding-bed behind it, together with a heap of rumpled clothes.

The hostess sat by her tea-table in a high-backed chair, dust throwing its rich carvings in bold relief.

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As she talked of the hurry of modern life and the beauty of the *Ideal*, she sprinkled the tea-cups with tepid tea (thereby making me very nervous, for I had on my new spring suit, which, among people of my class, is a thing of only biennial occurrence). Meanwhile a great yellow Angora cat walked about the table, dipping in the dish in primitive fashion, but tongue-wise, tasting the cream and licking the edges of the bread and butter that was afterwards offered to us!

But this is neither here nor there. I must do a personal and private sum in the subtraction of dishes, for I do not propose either to add to my helpers, oppress Effie, or stay indoors after breakfast and wipe my own dishes.

II

AUNT LOT REËNTERS

Second Day. I arrived at the case of poets to-day, which is beside that of classic fiction, so that by going across the top of both cases and descending shelf by shelf, the literature, absorbed in frequent peeps, is varied and stimulating. Getting down from my perch, to push back a curtain, again the lady of the sooty locks crossed my vision. This is becoming interesting; I shall write Sylvia about her at once. What did Horace mean by his accusation of "*A woman errant*," quickly spoken with the rising inflection that made it a question, a term coined by father several years ago, but now heard everywhere?

Old times had women errant who went forth for love, — and surely there were plenty of them, good and bad, if any one who loves in a great degree may be called bad, the badness being chiefly in our viewpoint. Surely here are two of them living even now in the last books I touched as the thought came, Marmion's Constance and the poor little page of

the Duke of Savoy. Perhaps, who knows, the modern woman errant goes out for lack of love and tries to fill its place with general experience.

Alack! books are all very well, but reading the lives we meet is a keener if more responsible pastime. I am growing careless, for father's best Quarles, in brown levant, being tightly squeezed between Crashaw on one side and George Herbert in ecclesiastic red on the other, pitched forward at my hasty touch and fell to the floor. What says the open page in rebuke for the fall? Quarles never minces matters or obscures his meanings. I read, "God hath given to mankinde a common Library, his creatures; and to every man a proper book, himselfe, being an abridgement of all the others."

At this moment the bell rang, and I saw over the door top that one of these living books, edition feminine, was coming through the hall, and that it did not stop at the office door, but bore swiftly down upon me. As escape was impossible, I seized a book and dusted vigorously, but only for a moment, for when the volume came into the light so that I could read the title, *Aunt Lot* was unmistakably stamped on the binding, which was of ginger-colored water-proof cloth. My Familiar Spirit quietly dropped into the scrap basket to be within hearing, yet out of sight.

Mrs. Jabez Crandon, the name Aunt Lot has borne during the nine years since she became the second wife of the Methodist minister with the eight-arrowed quiver, has led a somewhat rotary existence. We have seen and heard little of her save through her letters to father in response to the quarterly checks for the income of her little property of which, luckily for her and sadly for him, he is trustee.

In these replies she has managed to keep us informed as to the family history and the doings of my eight (as she is pleased to call them) cousins. In spite of myself I could not keep from becoming interested in them, poor motherless scraps, transferred without the voice of choice, to the care of a cast-iron moral incubator like Aunt Lot! In consequence, Evan and I have sent them big boxes of candy at Christmas, that at least once a year they may have an unrestrained human rapture. This began when the youngest was but three and the others ranged closely upward to fifteen. In due course stiff little supervised letters of thanks came to me, together with some painfully hand printed and coloured texts, labelled by the various names,—laborious and monotonous bits of gratitude, save the one signed *Susanna*. This always exhibited covert evidence of combined originality and rebellion, either in the choice of the

text or little curlicues in the decoration, whereby a flowing line was made to form horns, tail, and pitchfork, or where beneath the flowing robes of an angel a kerosene can might be outlined as if indicating its manner of ascent. Susanna was one of the three girls, the second eldest (she must be now twenty-two), the remainder of the octave fortunately being boys; and so when I heard a few years ago that a cousin of her mother's was to give her the advantages of that nebulous quantity known as the "higher education," I rejoiced in my heart over the opportunity of escape it might offer, and though we have sent her books occasionally through Aunt Lot, I have never yet seen her.

The first of the year another turn of the wheel, the fourth since her marriage, brought Aunt Lot to a new mission chapel between Pine Ridge and Bridgeton, consequently less than twenty miles away, so that I had anticipated a visitation as soon as "*the roads are settled*" (a rural statute of limitation), though hardly as early as book-dusting week. I scarcely realized that the time had arrived, when before I could greet her or get down from the ladder, the door again opened and I heard father's vigorous step enter, accompanied by a shuffle and a peculiar cough. The cough paused outside the office, and I

heard father say, "Go in there, Crandon, and get warm, and I will be with you in a moment."

Awful thought, the visitation contained the Reverend Jabez also! That is how I came to alight suddenly and leave father's precious little Eicon Basilicæ, Marshall portrait, black morocco binding, worn silver clasps, and all, on top of the ladder, where presently the sun reached in and caressed it lovingly.

* * * * *

"Dusting books again, Barbara?" said Aunt Lot, it seemed to me rather nervously, yet unable to drop her critical habit, making a peck at my cheek and reaching my chin. "I thought that you did not believe in house-cleaning turn-ups."

"Neither do I, but you will observe that the books come out and return two by two, like well-regulated Noah's-ark animals, and save for the ladder you would never know that anything was happening. Will you not come over to the den and take off your things, for of course you'll stay to luncheon and it is warmer there." I noticed at that moment that father had left manuscript of the book he is doing on The Effect of Education upon Woman, with Professors Nordshau of Leipsic and Truesdale of Northbridge, littered all over his desk, and fearing a return of Aunt Lot's old habit of pouncing and fingering, I

thought it more advisable to leave ;— also, when I dust, I have the windows down from the top, and it was chilly, even though a robin's real spring song came in on the wind.

“ Yes, *we* shall be glad to remain, very glad. You see, your uncle being in need of both dentistry and medical advice, I prevailed on him to accompany me, though much against his will, for he says truly ‘ A warrior of the Lord should never stray from his battle-ground ;’ but, being doubly disabled by a bad cough and having an unhappy accident to his upper teeth (yes, Barbara, broken quite in two, most unfortunate and expensive), I persuaded him that his absence would be less apparent ; so we took the train to Bridgeton, where the dentist said the repairs would take until to-morrow, and then we trolleyed out here to consult my brother about the cough, for though there are two physicians in the parish, they refuse in any way to practise together. As they both come of large families, to choose either would drive a certain following from the chapel, though our daughter Susanna has frivolously suggested that if we employ neither, both may go.

“ I thought *perhaps*, that is if you have no company, — for Jabez is not in condition to hold his own gracefully with those worldling friends of yours from the

Bluffs, — we *might* stay over night, and that would give him a chance to pick up his teeth at Bridgeton on his way home to-morrow.”

I assured her that it would be perfectly convenient, and hastened to the kitchen to order some chewless dish for his Reverence. Really I am ashamed that I do not grow more graciously adaptable to certain ordinary circumstances, but two dislikes I have never been able more than visibly to overcome, that of having people, tuned to a wholly different and often false pitch, break the rhythm of the home heart-beats by sleeping under the roof, and of being myself obliged to lie in a strange house, thus relinquishing my sleeping personality to the bed pervaded by the thoughts and dreams of another.

After this Aunt Lot grew quite cordial and loquacious; three of the boys are doing quite well, the eldest having a position in a New York office, the youngest being still at school. It seems to be the girls who worry her the most, — although reading between the lines they appear to be not only capable but intelligently independent, — and of the three Susanna is a very thorn in her flesh. Why, it is difficult to say, unless it is that Aunt Lot cannot understand her, and with fatal perverseness women seldom like those whose motives they are unable to fathom.

“Not that I would have you infer that she is wayward,” Aunt Lot’s voice droned on, as I started from a momentary reverie wherein I lost the connecting thread; “for she did well enough in college and earned her clothes all through, which was a great relief to us, I assure you, for her Boston cousin, a literary woman and very decided, who paid her other expenses, did not stipulate for these. Ah, yes, quite industrious; the first two vacations she took a summer school, and, having somehow managed to pick up stenography and typewriting, the third season she acted as vacation substitute in a large office building in Boston, while now she is substituting in the Bridgeton High School and Jabez says that her position will undoubtedly be made permanent; but the strange girl does not like the work and she is equally averse to embracing a golden opportunity, that, I may say without exaggeration, Providence has thrown at her very feet.”

“In what shape?” I asked, my previous interest in the girl reviving with added intensity.

“A missionary bishop with no incumbrances at present and comfortable private means with which to push the cause as well as oil domestic wheels,” and Aunt Lot leaned back in the Morris chair, until the entire soles of her “health” shoes were visible, wearing an expression of satisfaction, as if no further

honour could be offered any of us. Then, realizing that this was not all, she suddenly huddled herself together, sighed, and added, "But she persists in rejecting him."

"I suppose then she does not love him."

"Love him? I should not think a mere girl of twenty-two would *presume* so far as to love a man of his age and position on so short an acquaintance. He, however, is most considerate and does not insist upon pushing matters, for he says he feels in her a magnetism that would be productive of much good to the cause, and would like her to take a course of study that she might rank as a medical missionary."

As I said nothing, Aunt Lot took my silence for approval, which she evidently did not at first expect, and so continued more eagerly:—

"Personally I think she would excel in this calling, for, wilful as she is, she is fond of the sick and a great home lover."

"So for that reason you want her to tramp about, goodness knows where, in a vocation that would separate her from her family, if she has any, and calmly see them set adrift to be brought up as waifs." I thought this, I did not say it,—my interest in Susanna made me wise.

"How old is he?" I asked, after a pause.

"Fifty or thereabouts, a little more than less, perhaps, but wonderfully fresh and well preserved."

"What are his other disadvantages? You say *at present* he has no incumbrances. What became of them?"

Aunt Lot gave me a sharp glance, evidently not liking my manner of putting the question, but continued, picking her words jerkingly as if they were half-ripe berries growing among thick briars: "They are all dead. His first wife and two children died before he entered the field, — it was the shock of it that decided him. His second wife was a cousin of my husband's; she died in India, and his two young daughters, being sent home to relatives, did not survive the voyage. He will not return to India, — China will be his next venture, and you know that some parts of China are quite healthy. You see the dear man has had no little sickness and sorrow."

"I suppose that is why Susanna, in perfect, and what you called magnetic, health, appeals to him?"

"Precisely! I could not have hoped, dear Barbara, that you would so readily have taken our view of the situation. I only wish that you could see Susanna herself and talk with her, a — few — words

from a young woman in — your position would, I am sure, be more — effectual than anything we could say, — being as it might be thought — professionally prejudiced. And, Barbara, one — favour more, the — sooner — you see her the better, for, — will — you believe it, the rash girl has a scheme, which involves her sisters, for leaving her position as teacher and going into trade in Bridgeton, almost under our very noses !”

“What does she do at the week’s end, stay in Bridgeton or go home?”

“She has always returned to us until this — this — plan for her future — welfare has made her relations with her father rather — difficult, — and considering the influence upon her other sisters it is just as well for a few weeks — perhaps — you understand — that she remains in Bridgeton.”

“Then I will write and ask her to spend next Sunday here, and as it is almost lunch time perhaps you would like to go upstairs while I see if Mr. Crandon’s milk toast is ready.”

At this point the office door opened. As the tremulous coughing drew nearer, I retired behind Evan’s desk, lest his Reverence should feel moved to salute me on the cheek. Why is it that men who have bad complexions, chronic catarrh, and



loose, gaping lips always feel it their duty to kiss their wife's relations?

Father as usual saved the situation. Coming in with a genial wave of the hand, he greeted Aunt Lot with "Well, sister, we have attended to this cold in the nick of time; brother Crandon must lie down at once, be well covered, have something hot, and you must give him ten drops of the medicine in this glass every half-hour until night. We shall have him in good shape by to-morrow, when, he tells me, he has an important engagement in Bridgeton that cannot be postponed without seriously impairing his usefulness to his flock. I have directed Effie to light the fire in the guest room."

Aunt Lot had not intended spending the afternoon ministering to her Jabez; however, what could she do but retire with bottle and toast dish?

I looked at father; the end of his nose was twitching wickedly, his unconscious way of winking, as he stood with his back to the fire. Then I reached up and, pulling his head down, gave him my most forcible hug and kiss of comprehension, which was doubly returned. How inexpressibly convenient at times is this wordless speech!

Third Day. I wrote to Susanna last night, also

to Sylvia Bradford and Lavinia Cortright. The Cortrights have actually bought the Alton cottage at last, and I am to have the joy of helping them "make garden" this very spring. Their move has been deferred two seasons owing to legal complications, but Martin's summer abroad has completed his rejuvenation and companionableness and their honeymoon has seemed none the less bright because it began in the third quarter.

Sylvia is coming to Pine Ridge in May, without waiting for college to close, as her brother Carthy has returned from his Wyoming ranch, where he has been for many years, to gain some little knowledge of his father's business affairs. Which of the two grandparents, the quaint country gentlewoman or the shrewd, hard-headed financier, is the more devoted to Sylvia's little daughter, it is impossible to say. As for Sylvia herself, in spite of her married happiness, there is still a little vein of sadness in her attitude, as if her sense of the responsibility of motherhood and her deep love of little Anne, named for Mrs. Bradford, made her dread the time when she must tell her daughter the story of her own mother.

Ah me! but the stepladder seems a safe perch after yesterday's invasion. I can lean on the lowered window-sash, and, looking upward, see the

bluebirds clearing out their box under the barn gables, and downward trace a golden pattern, worked in the grass by crocuses and daffodils. Life and rejuvenation everywhere outdoors, with joy in the heart!

But what is this within the window? A butterfly upon Eicon Basilicæ that I left yesterday on the ladder top! An exquisite yellow swallow-tail gaining his first winged liberty upon the Sad King's book! How came it there? Ah, the same old symbol of life in death. Here, under the silver clasp and clinging between rough leaf edges and the cover, is hid the chrysalis wherein the change was wrought. How can people ever doubt the soul's immortality? Its death would be the only incomprehensible thing.

* * * * *

The *Rural Free Delivery* Postman came on horse-back to-day. I suppose the mud is deep on the turnpike and he could not rise above it like the swallows, or feed upon it like the crocuses. Seeing me, he rode up the path and tossed the letters in over the sash. Another Leipsic letter for father, with ten cents to pay for overweight,—German profundity and economy seem in this case well balanced. Dear, funny men! how serious they are

about the ultimate destination of the female sex,—
as if there could be any question about it!

What is this? A letter from Lavinia Dorman,
and one from Mrs. Jenks-Smith, with a deep black
border and the New York postmark! It is the first
time I have heard from her since her widowhood,
half a year ago, though Lavinia Cortright said she
had already tired of her hastily made resolution to
live abroad.

As a widow what will the lady of the Bluffs be and
do, I wonder?

III

THE ARRIVAL OF SUSANNA

Book-dusting Week: Sixth Day. A snow flurry this morning! The daffies and crocuses hung dejected heads like people under the spell of influenza. The birds have left the open and come again to the protected corner south of the house, where the evergreens challenge the northeast wind, and a tall stump with many crevices has served all winter as a lunch-counter where feathered wayfarers might find food of suet, nuts, grain, or powdered dog-bread, according to their needs.

Here my song sparrow spent the morning, together with chickadees, juncos, downy woodpeckers, and yellowhammers. The frozen ground sent even the robins to the suet, and yesterday, as I went to the sun garden to see how the dial had weathered the winter, a flock of winter-clad goldfinches came dipping down the sky to feed upon the seeds of coreopsis, zinnias, and sunflowers, whose stalks, bent by the first snow, have been in cold storage these many weeks.

How wild Nature provides for her own, when man's

hand does not interfere to spoil the balance in his rage for improvement, and do away with sheltering underbrush and food stored in berry and seed! It often seems to me, judging by out-door signs, that much of what is called progress is retrogression under another name, for at all times when the external and theoretical is waging such desperate warfare with reality, there is much in a name. Take for instance our one distinctive type of national music called "ragtime," an expression of the good-natured vigour of the people, whose toes and ears it enters at the same time. It is repudiated with horror by the classical musician and his followers; yet, at its inception, if some one standing on the correct pedestal had but named the movement "Eccentric Syncopation" or the like, it might have proudly climbed into a niche of the music of the future, and Kundry and the Flower Maidens become doubly dangerous by undulating to its measures.

At noon the snow had changed to misty rain. Something on the telephone wire, that slants downward from the house eaves to the barn, caught my eye. Was it the drops of water stringing themselves endlessly along the copper strand? No, a little ball of feathers, dun above and light beneath, shook itself, unfolded its wings, jerking its tail to keep the balance,

while it raised its dark crest and called "Phœbe, phœbe — a!" directly above my window.

How well you know, dear little house lover, that it is spring and not autumn that is dawning in spite of appearances! We have a great deal to say to each other, you and I, if we could only be granted the speech, just as we share the hope universal. Yes, you built your first nest last year on the sill of the store-room window, and not an insect in the nearest part of the garden or along the dell escaped your vigilant aerial patrol. Then as the season grew warmer you chose a convenient bracket under the roof of the well-house for a summer watering-place resort, and had but just completed your masonry of moss and mud when I discovered you and grieved because the well-house is *oban*, a place forbidden to nests for obvious reasons.

Then the boys took pity on you, and Ian arranged a little nook under the eaves of the tool-house in the shade and fastened a flat fig basket in it; while Richard climbed up, and, slipping a pie plate under the scarce dried nest, quickly put it in its new place, where, as it adhered firmly, after a few hours spent in doubtful fumings on the clothes-line and on the dead side branch of a cedar across the fence, you decided to take up your abode.

Yes, it is cold and dreary here to-day, and not an insect flying. You had better go down by the cow barns for warmth and shelter, and food, too, for where the sun strikes the litter, there the first winged life appears.

Perhaps the sun will shine and bring a mild day to-morrow and awaken some of the sweet white violets whose mats flank the snowdrops. I'm sure I have earned them, for the dusting is all over and done, and I've not stopped long enough the whole week to do more than glance at my letters.

I confess to having sent for Martha Corkle (Saunders) to come down this morning to "goody" me a little and do the shampooing that ends this dusty week. It is so soothing to feel the touch of her firm fingers and to know that, when I lie down on the hearth rug with my head on the wicker stool and my mane spread fireward, she will keep it well stirred and also have a watchful eye for sparks, at the same time that she grows confidential and tells me all the harmless babble of household, farm, and the whole township as well.

To-day, in addition to expecting Susanna Crandon, — who accepted my invitation with an unfeigned pleasure that is as delightful as it is rare to see in a college girl of twenty-two, and is coming down on

the five-thirty train,—it is also the first Saturday in March, and the boys' top-pegging tournament came off this morning in the barn, under their father's supervision, which means a lunch party of eight boys afterward, six besides our own; and as Richard and Ian were allowed to choose their own guests from among their schoolmates, without let or hindrance on our part, I was a little anxious as to the result.

I knew by the way in which Martha fidgeted with my brushes after she had washed them and set my dressing-table to rights, carefully keeping out of my line of vision, that she had something on her mind; so I said: "Martha, do be comfortable and sit down here where I can see you and let us have an old-fashioned talk. What shall it be about,—Timothy, the incubators, or your Easter bonnet?" (Martha having made a great success with chickens during the past two years, our plant has been transferred to the "Corner Farm," where, at almost any time of the night during the anxious season of "chipping," she may be seen clad in a flowing wrapper going her rounds with a lantern, seeming to the uninitiated a weird cross between Lady Macbeth and La Sonnambula.) "You did not have a new bonnet last year, so I'm going to think up something for you that shall be simply grand. What do you say to black straw

with a half-wreath of real English primroses? I saw some the last time I was in New York that looked as if they were grown on a sunny bank, and Mrs. Cortright wished to buy them for you on the spot."

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Evan, the black straw I'll hold to, but if it's the same I'd prefer jets to primroses, all black now being held stylish and not mourning, as it were, and much richer like if good quality, my maying days bein' over, and no disrespect intended. The hincubators is doing finely, with eight broods well feathered, two more to chip to-night, besides eggs not yet gone in.

"As to news, Mrs. Evan, there's enough about and to spare, but perhaps you have heard it from Mrs. Mullins, for it was on her way here yesterday that I learned it, only I told her about you being busy and she'd so many folk to tell I doubted if she'd got here yet."

(Mrs. Mullins, *née* Ryan, had been the best cooky-making cook of my youth, and the friendly relations had always continued to the extent of a couple of visits a year, so that I should lose no details of family statistics.)

I said I had not seen or heard of Mrs. Mullins since Christmas, when she came to tell me the double good news that Rose was doing finely at the busi-

ness college in Bridgeton, while Delia was keeping steady company with "a elegant young fellow," a stenographer and shipping clerk in the iron works at eighteen dollars a week, and that they were to be married at Easter; "so I conclude the news is about the wedding," I added.

"It is and it isn't," said Martha, and by the way in which she picked up her apron and began to crease it systematically, I knew that she had a long and exciting tale to unfold.

"You see, Mrs. Evan, it all began by making a girl feel too big and smart. Rose, she was pretty and had a snappy way with her that her father and the boys used to laugh at and help her on with, when I first came here. Then she learned pieces to speak at school holidays, and when they had a piano and singing in the school it gave her a chance to show off some more, and her people said she could be a fine singer if she pleased, but Tim and I, we thought to ourselves, it was more a way of wriggling she had than anything in her voice.

"Time came to leave school; she stayed on, not carin' for out work or helpin' at home, though her people were strugglin' hard to pay for the new farm, but not a word would they say except 'Rosie was meant to rise in the world and she must not

be hustled.' Delia meanwhile gets promised to the young man who was then getting twelve a week, with hopes of eighteen the first of the year, but Rose turns up her nose at her sister's courtin' and says she's a fool to work for a man without wages, and that's all marryin' is,—that she means to see the world and make her own pay and keep it! They had some words, but the mother passed them over as girls' talk, and thereabouts Rose coaxed her father, cramped though he was, to lay out money for the course at the business college.

"This he did, both being willin' to start her and seeing some advantage to the home when she was placed and payin' board, which, Mrs. Evan, by pullin' together is the only way homes can be kept from fallin' apart and tossin' everybody into cheap lodgings these days, with food and coals so high.

"Everything was quiet and promising till a month ago or thereabouts, when Rose finished out her year and had her name wrote down for a position. That she was smart I'll not deny, and quick for seein' everything at once, and her people were well content when she had the offer of typewriting and clerking work here at our bank. Do you think would she take it, Mrs. Evan? No, not she! To go out and see life was what she wanted. Bridge-

ton was near enough home and she'd *prefer* New York. So it hung along a time and Delia's young man got her some writing at the Iron Works. Next thing that happened he was struck sick with pneumonia and she was took in the office a few weeks; and Mrs. Evan, as I live and breathe and speak the truth, she's undercut him and took his job for ten to begin, and he's put back to only packin' and shippin', not through any fault or shiftlessness of his, but as the boss says to him, — 'Of course you could do more work and help in other ways at a pinch, but she's all right and she's cheaper!'

"Such a time as there was at the house that night, which was two days ago; Mrs. Mullins had no words to describe it, only crying. All the plans for the wedding are overthrown, as the young man on the strength of his raise had bought a why-pay-rent? house from a building company, which he can't keep up, though he's paid money down and three months' rent. Delia says, and rightly, 'Rose should have been born to be wife to Judas,' and Rose gives back a hard laugh, and says, 'I'd rather be that than strung to a fellow who couldn't keep his job,' and that men aren't in it nowadays. But that anyway she won't want the job for more than a year just for the experience, and then he can take it back and get married!

“ The father then seein’ how he’d been done, with Rose having no intention of boarding at home, took a hand, and Mrs. Mullins ran for the priest, but what could the good man do in a labour competition riot, for that is what Timothy Saunders says it all is, and, as I’ve found through eight years, his sense is solid.”

Again the face with the sooty hair and the red-curtain background flitted before me. What had the well-dressed, well-poised unknown to do with Rose Mullins either actually or ethically? I wondered how soon the Bradfords would write me about her? This episode was an example from humble life of the challenge of the woman domestic by the woman errant (that term that haunts me, this also seems to be the purport of father’s correspondence with the wise-acres on the educational outlook which I have promised to read and copy for him). I felt a great pity for the hard-working Mullins parents, and told Martha so; they have done their best for their children, and, without grinding them down, have the old-world desire of keeping a home together in the town where they have served more than half a lifetime and are well known. They have not yet assumed that honest and hereditary service is a thing not only to be avoided but despised as carrying a stigma.

Martha paused for breath and to re-part my hair so as to reveal the wet streaks, but I saw that her budget was not yet exhausted ; and, leaning back and closing my eyes in comfortable resignation, I said, "What next ?"

"Having given Mrs. Mullins's misfortunes their place, I must now speak of my own man, of Timothy Saunders, Mrs. Evan, ma'am ; he has his mind made up to join the country and no disrespect intended it !"

For a moment I did not understand, and I saw visions of Crumpled Tim leaving home and spouse, and shaking a tambourine as he followed in the wake of the Salvation Army, for Martha's expression spoke of tragedy.

"Yes, ma'am, joining the country and handin' in his vote at the town-house when time comes to give the say-so to them as 'll do the least harm."

Then light dawned. "You mean that Timothy wishes to be a citizen of the United States ? Why, I thought that he had been one this long time !"

"Well, he has been resigned private, as it were, for quite a piece, but he wouldn't do it open-like while our old Queen lived. If they'd have just let him join and wrote his name for his intentions and voted, that was one thing, but he says, says he, 'I'll not forswear a woman and one old enough for me mither ;

if it got back to her she might misconstrue the motive and feel hurt like, but now that the King's come in over yonder, it's juist mon to mon, and no bad feeling.'

"Timothy Saunders is no light body to go into a thing skin deep and shilly-shally like, so he's looked into matters a bit, and he allows that the declarin' o' theirselves independent showed proper spunk considerin' the provocation there was behind it of treating grown folk, so to speak, like children to be put to bed early, and have no say-so even as to the spendin' of their own pocket-money.

"What he can't wholly get down and keep is the reading in that little black book of the Constitution they made a piece later, for the ruling of theirselves, together with those words, Mrs. Evan, about all men being born free and equal and what leads from that out. Now, Timothy says that he can't never allow they was so born or likely to be, nor is it to be desired, human nature being various from the start, and blights and crimes and diseases being handed downable, which the Bible allows, notwithstanding those folk seem to have forgot. This makes the whole thing fall apart, as it were, and not rightly suitable for these times as they've come about; but when I asked Timothy to call upon the minister or the doctor to

expound the same, he says, 'No, Martha, I'll work it out meself; the learned has too free ways of speaking, giving out ither meanings than was meant, and no disrespect intended.' So I thought maybe you would give me a word for my own satisfaction."

Here was a dilemma, — the canny old Scotchman qualifying his desire for American citizenship by his desire for constitutional amendment.

Going involuntarily to the window, I gazed out; but my thoughts were instantly focussed by the procession coming from the direction of the barn, consisting of three or four dogs, Richard, Ian, and their guests. Scanning these last curiously, I saw this strange combination: the son of the Anglican Catholic clergyman; the boy of the Polish shoemaker, suspected to be, though not confessedly, a Jew; Patsy Nally, whose father raises onions and pigs on the far side of the village; the son of the Italian fruit-dealer who goes by the nickname of Toney "Guinea"; the Crusiak cripple yclept "Hop Sticks," whose Hungarian father is flagman at the turnpike railway crossing; and Sidney Hollister, the only child of the richest magnate of Oaklands and Bridgeton combined!

Beckoning Martha, whose question I had not yet answered, to the window, I pointed to the group. "Perhaps this is what it means," I said; "that here

all people who have the stuff in them have a chance to become equal notwithstanding the conditions of birth."

"It may be the *meaning*, but it's not the *saying*, Mrs. Evan," she replied with a sniff, and I saw that her eyebrows and shoulders were both elevated to their limit, while fierce disapproval shot from her black eyes; and I know by experience that when this conjunction occurs, Martha is unconvincible.

So I made haste to do up my hair and get out the stout gingham bags about eight inches square that, filled with marbles, were to constitute the lunch "favours" for this most democratic meal; and, in sorting the miggles, alleys, and agates, as I stuffed the holders to repletion, the remembrance of my own marble-playing days came back, — a sort of spring song, even if keyed in ragtime, — and I realized that in marbles, as in other things, times had changed; for marbles, of especially the higher grades, are cheaper than they used to be, though certainly of a poorer quality.

The luncheon passed off without riot, Evan presiding, while I took peeps through the pantry-door crack. It was amusing to watch, in the four alien guests, the combination of boyish ease with a certain "feeling the way" in unaccustomed surroundings. I am sure

that if our stalwart outspoken Acting Father of the Country could have peeped with me he would have forgotten race suicide (his saying that the irresponsible breeders raise on a banner to hide their improvidence), and frankly agreed that we are not a *race*, and never can be, but a people amalgamated by the survival of the naturally fittest for the country's use, while the art spirit that is to mitigate a certain sordid taint of materialism, born of local self-satisfaction, can only obtain through race mingling, not through the in-breeding of certain castes.

"How did you choose your guests?" I asked the boys when it was all over, — one lonely little cake, evidently left for manners, being the only remaining article of food from a supply that had seemed enough for twelve boys, — and the last bag of marbles had disappeared down the road.

"That was easy; we just took the kids that could hold their end up pegging and playin' marbles!" said Ian.

"All except 'Hop Sticks,'" chimed in Richard, "and we asked him so he shouldn't feel left, 'cause he's lame!"

* * * * *

Evan drove to the train to meet Susanna Crandon, for I confessed to being tired and Tim drives al-

most constantly with father now. Dear father! from his mental and physical vigour no one would dream that he is well over sixty, but the secret of his lingering at the point of perfect ripening is his wisdom in dropping the little non-essential tasks that add to the day's fatigue. The time having come when holding the reins all day and fastening and blanketing horses a dozen odd times impairs the force that is his patients' due, he has stopped the habit.

The hospital absorbs him more and more, not only from the medical but from the psychological standpoint; for a general hospital of repute, in a city whose arts and manufactures draw all classes to it, is in itself a reduced image of the world at large. One of the experiments that for two years has disturbed his conservatism, but toward which his attitude is changing, was the entrance of a female physician into the solid circles of Bridgeton, who subsequently became an applicant for a position on the hospital staff. No man that lives gives woman a truly higher place than father, yet from his rich experience none better knows the indisputable actuality of her nerve-limits, whose fount is identical with the form of her existence.

As a conscientious nurse, he honours her and bows before her intuitive intelligence. As a physician

and surgeon for her own sex, wherein she pleads the importance of her mission, he regards her usefulness at best but as auxiliary; for he always dreads lest the crucial moment, when life or death hangs in the balance, should find her at the period of her limitation. Besides, he knows that woman can never impart to woman that strength to bear that is half the gift of healing and lies in her inherent sex confidence in man, the inheritor from his Creator of the vital life spark; neither does he believe that when a woman decides to adopt a profession, and by marrying assumes a dual role, that she should ever mate with one in a like calling, for rivalry is no wholesome housemate.

The two doctors Gerarde, husband and wife, are such unusual people that they seem, at least, to be the exception to the rule of general happenings. He, a man of forty, trained in the best schools of America and Europe, widely read, with means sufficient to indulge his love of study *con amore*; she with a pleasing personality, born of a family of brains, having the same mental and physical training as her brothers, choosing her profession through a fine passion for doing good and aiding her sex, at thirty had already received applause for her writings, when mutual sympathies and the intimate contact of

a child's hospital, where Gerarde was a consulting specialist, culminated in the marriage, she receiving his love as added recognition.

Returning with him to Bridgeton, each took up the life anew, two offices flourishing in the same house; while her own people wondered how she could part with so much individuality as lay even in the surrender of her name. They wondered more when a son was born. Her expansive mind and subservient body really seemed, even to father, to proclaim her more than woman; and so it has come to be that the women and children's medical ward is practically in her charge, though of course behind her is her husband.

Late this afternoon the sun came out with an expression of honesty in his face, tore the leaden clouds into shreds and scattered them along the horizon, as if he meant to put an end to existing conditions and make the reformation of weather his special charge.

I went down into the garden to search for a few daffies in some sheltered nook to bring a spring thought to the dinner-table. Passing the flower pit opened to air where, to my shame be it said, I had not ventured for a week, as my last instalment of bulbs are blooming in the den windows, a breath of exquisite fragrance wafted out, and I cried aloud,

"The wallflowers are in bloom!" Straightway I clambered down among the pots of winter-stored tea-roses, geraniums, lemon balm, and Fuchsias, to bury my face in the golden brown mass of velvet petals that covered the sturdy bushes grown in many deep boxes.

"Die gelbe Violet" the Germans intimately call this homely flower (homely in the true sense of the word), and a "golden violet" it surely is, if thrift in humble surroundings, carrying a touch of the sun and the odour of the essence of spring, can make it such. I gathered a lavish bunch for the evening meal, and as I came out again into the air I listened, half expecting to hear the cheerful croak of the little hylas, so surely had spring taken possession of my heart.

On entering the house, however, another unmistakable odour of spring greeted me, but in a different degree. Richard and Ian, also spurred by the incentive to find some growing thing, had explored the swamp woodland beyond the wild garden, and, bringing home half a dozen sturdy skunk-cabbages in their vigorous first youth, together with mud and bog moss, had built a centrepiece of them in my best green and gold glass bowl. Yet of the two, their flower was the truly typical of the season,

born of well-springs of deep moisture, awaiting its time through all the period of ice and snow for the call of the messenger; so we compromised, and they put their offering on the "flower greeting table" in the hall.

When I heard the noise of the train die away in the distance, I stationed myself behind the plants in the den window, with a keen feeling of expectation in which hope and curiosity were equally blended. Would my idea of Susanna be realized? Or had I built up a fabric about her unusualness out of the easily spun but perishable strands of imagination?

When I thought of any qualities she might have inherited from her father, my heart sank; but then there was her mother to be accounted for, and surely the fact that she had lived for at least half of the past eight years with Aunt Lot, without open warfare, spoke at least of strength of character.

The Stanhope turned in at the gate and had hardly come to a stop when a brown coated and hatted figure emerged from under the hood, and, saying a few words, evidently of thanks, to Evan, coupled with a bright smile, came lightly up the steps, suit case in hand.

As I opened the door, she stepped inside and,

dropping her burden to clasp both arms about me, cried, "Oh, Cousin Barbara, if you only knew for how many years I've wanted to come to you!"

I wonder why it is that with some the first glance, the first touch, tell of an unconscious intimacy that lifelong contact with others, in all respects outwardly congenial, does not bring about?

In a moment I found myself holding by the shoulders and looking into the face of this young girl, as if at a friend long cherished and not a stranger entering my life for the first time.

And the face was wholesomely good to look upon, — clear-skinned, with a firm, frank mouth, robbed of sternness by the quivering at its corners, deep blue eyes that opened wide and looked one through and through, while the head was topped by a mass of chestnut-brown hair that rolled naturally back from a broad forehead, breaking here and there into little curves of spray and then disappearing under an evidently, though not too painfully, home-made hat. About the medium height, her body was lean rather than slender, and the well-knit framework was there for the perfected structure that love and life alone can complete.

I found myself going upstairs with her as a matter of course, and waiting in her room while she took off

her hat and straightened her wayward mane. All the while her eyes expressed unmistakable admiration for everything they opened upon until, spying the hearth fire, she fell upon her knees before the blazing logs, saying: "I wonder if my far-back ancestors were fire-worshippers? For though we have never had a fire like this in all our lives,—only ugly, black, head-achy stoves,—yet when we, the girls and I, build air-castles, there is a hearth fire in every room, and a special one that burns all the year round that I call the home fire, and we tell it all our secrets and give it offerings."

A shout from the boys below and a skirmishing of dogs told that father and Evan were coming in together; and, bethinking me that she might not like dogs, I asked, — a necessary question to newcomers, — "Susanna, do you like dogs?"

Before she could answer in words, one of the younger hounds, hearing voices, came galloping upstairs to us, leaped on a chair, and gave her an enthusiastic lick on the nose, so that a return hug was all the reply necessary. As we were going out of the door, she turned back and, half hesitating, said: "It is very soon for me to beg favours, Cousin Barbara, but would you please call me Sukey instead of Susanna? The boys, I mean my brothers, do, though father

says it is a name for a monkey, not a Christian. I was called for my great-aunt, and when she died she left me a coloured print of the Bible picture of Susanna in a black glass frame, for the naming! Since then I've always hated the very sound of my name, for it makes me keep looking over my shoulder and seeing the Elders. And, instead of outgrowing the idea, lately it has been rather worse, because a friend of father's, a missionary bishop, who is fairly camping at our house, resting between whiles, is the living image of the nearest Elder in the picture."

Thus had I in a nutshell Sukey Crandon's opinion of the paternal project matrimonial!

IV

BUDGET FROM MRS. MARTIN CORTRIGHT

(BORN LAVINIA DORMAN)

“NEW YORK, Greenwich Village, *March 2, 19—*.”

“MY DEAR BARBARA,

“What has kept me so busy since the holidays? I do not wonder that you ask and remind me that I have only sent what you rightly call ‘snubs to friendship,’ in the form of postal cards!

“My reason, however, is as astonishing as it is forcible; my time has been absorbed by woman, individually and in the aggregate. In fact, in a saturate solution of woman have I been utterly swamped.

“As you know, it is two years since Martin’s book on the ‘Social History of Old New York’ was published and was most heartily received both by the press and the reading public, not only because it was interesting, but because, instead of rethreshing old straw, it drew from original and in many cases heretofore undiscovered sources.

“Instantly he was brought in touch with scholars

all over the country, and several periodicals asked him to contribute series of papers on varied historical topics. This led, aided and abetted by me, to his spending the year abroad to study, on their own soil, the personality of the different races from which the American people sprang, the better to understand the processes of amalgamation; and not only was he in the seventh heaven of student ardour, but he grew younger so rapidly that I began to tremble for my own sober years.

“On our return, however, this transport was rudely brought to a close by the appalling bulk of correspondence that publicity brought upon him. Among his correspondents were a few men, but the bulk were women, of divers grades of intelligence and social station, but all in some stage of newly acquired genealogical mania, not unfrequently mistaken for patriotism, that seems so odd to those of us who, as a matter of course, know from whence we come and attach no undue importance to it, being satisfied that our forbears did their duty without desiring to advertise the fact by placarding ourselves with labels like a travelling-trunk.

“At first these letters interested Martin, and he strove to answer each one courteously; then, while he ceased to consider them seriously, yet they amused

him ; until finally they not only bored but shocked him, and he pressed me into service to sort and classify them, while together we strove to think out some plan for stemming the tide. Not only was he requested to solve questions in ancestry that involved weeks of research, but he was even asked to suggest possible ancestors for those who wished to attain social prominence by joining some society or other whereby the daughters of those who preached universal equality nullify the principles their ancestors lauded by establishing purely artificial clans. In addition he was asked to take dubious quantities for granted and confirm them by his guarantee. One woman irritated him beyond endurance, and I must say that he was as rude to her as a gentleman could be.

“ Martin had written two or three rather pretty sketches, threaded by a slight romance, the better to bring out the historic surroundings. This woman (at present a New Yorker, though to the Whirlpool cannot be laid the crime of having bred her) asked him to weave her daughter, name and all, — it chanced to be the same as a member of Washington’s cabinet, — into one of these stories, offering to have a series of beautiful portrait illustrations made for the book by an artist whose prices are fabulous. As a return for this certainly original bit of modern adver-

tising, she offered to send him a check for any sum "within reason" that he should mention for any charity he might designate, showing a certain intuitive shrewdness in not offering him a purely personal bribe. His reply was of telegraphic brevity:—

“Madam: The man whom you would claim as the founder of your family was never married.

“Your ob'd't servant,

“MARTIN CORTRIGHT.’

After this occurrence, which was soon after your flying visit to us in the holidays, I have been acting as Martin's confidential clerk and what-not. Verily, Barbara, I thought that I knew my own sex, as it exists hereabouts, fairly well, and that after Mrs. Latham's divorce and marriage to Monty Bell nothing could surprise me; but now I realize that either I am discovering woman for the first time, or that the present phase is one that transcends all past experiences.

“His Grace of Canterbury is attributed with recently having said that, 'owing to the problems it presents, this twentieth century bids fair to be the most important and interesting since the Christian era.' That this is a fair estimate few will be likely to dispute, but to my intelligence, limited

by conservatism as it may be called, the publicity of women is the problem in chief, because to my mind it underlies in a great degree the questions of labour and social organization.

“It is the age of the woman who goes forth, the woman errant, Horace Bradford calls her, and he of course has opportunities, as professor in a semi-coeducational or parallel college, to study the beginnings of her evolution at close range.

“Her chief end and aim seems to be the gaining of what she calls ‘recognition’ and ‘identity.’ By many devious paths does she seek it, but I truly think the general and unintelligent rush clubward is the most piteous scene in the entire drama, for, under the plea of independence of thought and action, the majority are dominated by the few who scheme for their own personal ends; while to the maid, wife, and widow the club offers an equal snare, for there is no phase of life too sacred or private for the woman’s club to probe with its meddling, restless fingers, and by establishing a glittering counter-field to home life, saps the vitality of home itself.

“One of the strangest things is that these people cannot seem to realize that mere flocking and herding together under the flimsiest pretext does not give, but destroys, identity; sheep go in flocks.

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"Twice this winter have I been asked in all seriousness to read papers before gatherings of well-bred and apparently intelligent women; once upon 'The Duty of Woman to Society,' the second subject being 'Which Parent should dominate the Education of the Child?'

"Imagine the absurdity of it, Barbara, if you can. I who have never had even quasi-parental experience or written a word in my life, save letterwise! Oh, the harm that is done by the spread of undigested information that is called Education, but which bears the same relation to real culture that the mummy does to the living being.

"Was it not Ruskin, in one of his inspired tantrums, who said of a certain sort of unassimilated education, that it was 'loading a barge with rubbish until it sank'? There are many such foundering craft at present outlined upon my horizon.

"Hardly a day passes but what Martin receives one or more letters like the following, written in the various stereotyped, public-school hands of ten or twenty or even more years ago, thus giving some indication of the writer's age. The paper is of good quality, the spelling usually correct, and frequently stamps for the reply are enclosed in businesslike fashion.

“ LAKE VIEW, ILL.

“ [This heading may be safely placed in any state or territory with equal propriety.]

“ DEAR SIR :—

“ I am to read a paper before our Club next Wednesday upon a topic or person in American history, one that shows the superiority of woman preferred. As my time is so short, I thought perhaps you could suggest something and tell me the name of the books where I could read about it. I am very anxious to have a good paper, because I am a newcomer here, and no one is anybody until they have read a club paper.

“ I saw your book on “ Old New York ” in the Club Library, and think that you would know just what I ought to say. I always wanted to see New York, and now I am more anxious than ever—it must be so different!

“ Thanking you in advance for your trouble in helping me about my paper, I am,

“ Gratefully yours,

“ MRS. LULU DEMIN.

“ Member of Ex.-Comm. Woman’s Reform Club.’

“ This species of epistle is interspersed with those from persons having supposedly rare volumes of

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Americana, usually either the wrong editions, or imperfect copies, — which either lack plates or, having them, are rendered worthless by the colour-boxes of children, — and others from the owners of the manuscript diaries of maiden aunts whose vagarious accounts of utterly unimportant town and country doings are supposed to constitute history because they took place in the same century with the Boston Tea Party. These are all offered, as a favour of course, to Martin at monstrous prices as invaluable aids to his work.

“Next in rank are the sometimes really pathetic letters telling of aspirations to authorship and asking, in perfect good faith, ‘Would you kindly send me a list of stirring historic events that have not yet been used in fiction?’ To this group belong the manuscripts, long and short, that come a-begging for opinions of their merit or otherwise; in this class, mostly from women, are also a few from male antiquarians and rural clergy who think the perpetrating of a historical novel of the Puritan type consistent with their cloth and possibly an addition to their incomes. These manuscripts are much alike, the ingredients — a spinning-wheel, warming-pan, flint-lock musket, an Indian, a supposed witch, two handsome and wicked Royalists, a brave and con-

sumptive loyalist, a hesitating maiden, and a meeting-house during the Sunday noontime intermission — being mixed in different proportions, but with the vitalizing leaven *always* omitted.

“Last, and easiest of all to answer, are the requests for autograph copies of Martin’s writings to be sold at various bazaars for charity. I really think this tickled that delightful naive vanity which is wrapped as a protector about the hearts of the best of men, — that is at first, — but now I notice that the long quotations that covered a page are shrinking from all sides, and before the winter is over I expect to find only a dateless name.

“Every morning I have given to this work, until I almost yield to Martin, who insists upon taking Horace Bradford’s suggestion of having a paid amanuensis (how strange that old-time word looks! Stenographer and typist is to-day’s equivalent). Do you know of any one, woman or girl, who would care to come to us for the time between now and our leaving town, see a little of the city, and, if the plan works, continue with us when we go to Oaklands in May?

“If the detail of letter writing is removed, I shall still have enough to do, for there are the women that call instead of writing. I suppose the fact of our

living our own lives in our own way in this little-known part of New York is an attraction to the curious, as Martin's really fine library is a magnet to the scholarly. At any rate I have many amusing experiences, not the least of which is a keen enjoyment at the way in which certain of these callers of my own sex resent *me!* There is a distinct type of well-born, perfectly respectable, well-dressed, and usually almost brilliant woman (age seldom less than thirty), whose attitude toward life is one of continued theoretical experiment, or, as it is called, 'mental dissipation.' The Lady of the Beeches belonged to this tribe, I am sure. She may be married, but is more often single or a widow; she openly avows her independence of man, and steps out often quite needlessly and conspicuously to face the world; bewails as decadence any marriages among her women friends, seeking to bind them to her by an almost masculine influence, while at the same time she regards every man whom she deems worthy to cross swords with her as special property, and in a wordless way of her own exacts personal, or as she would call it, intelligent, homage from them throughout the entire course of her errantry. She is also found, by stress of circumstances, in many industrial grades, where her going

forth is a necessity and would be a virtue but for the attitude that accompanies it, which thinks only of self and is a perpetual challenge by the woman errant of the woman domestic. (This I must confess is a direct quotation from Horace Bradford.)

“I am a domestic woman, consequently I am resented even in my own house by my Lady Errant who comes to untie a knotty point in genealogy, to verify some facts for a newspaper article, or discuss the manners and customs of the past, for of all the equivalents of the lance she carries, brush, music roll, or pen, the latter is the most suited to her use.

“Martin is quite able to take care of himself, and I never meddle in these literary interviews in his study, except that he allows nothing to interrupt our cosey cup of tea there together by the fireside at five; so I invariably follow the tea tray, asking any one who may be present to join us. Ah! but it is amusing, and yet I can understand a younger woman domestic resenting the pose of her challenger, — for pose it is, in spite of independent words.

“Yes, my dear old father, worldly wise though a cleric, used to say to my mother when his woman parishioners flocked about him, offering many needless yet well-intentioned courtesies, ‘They mean well, my dear, and you know a woman is never truly happy

unless she is in some way ministering to a man,' while mother would smile gently, well knowing that it is the first law of life.

"Bless me! what a preachment I am sending you, when my only intention was the making of a 'heart to heart' excuse; and so much to be said about spring plants, too! I received your batch of seed catalogues last night, together with Evan's sketch showing the possibilities in the old weedy bit of garden that lies between the grape arbour and the hen-house.

"It is also time for tea, and looking out from my desk at the window I see Ivory Steele coming up the street. She is a new acquaintance and one of those women whose face, once seen, for some unknown reason cannot be forgotten.

"I will continue this letter to-night or to-morrow in our old-fashioned budget fashion, and tell you about her.

"March 2, —.

"Martin has gone to a meeting of the St. Nicholas Society, and I am alone in the library this evening. This is a very rare thing, for nowadays, even when Martin is out, any one of a dozen people may drop in who thoroughly understand that we foster the obsolete habit of social evening calling as distinct

from the mere perfunctory dinner 'duty call.' What pleases me the most is that our visitors are not all middle-aged like ourselves, but include Archie Martin's son-in-law, Neil Gordon, a very bright man of thirty-odd and literary editor of the *Morning Despatch*, who brings Janet with him as often as the care of a small son and heir will allow.

"This, for me, is returning to first principles, for Cordelia Martin was my childhood's friend; and though they moved uptown and she made a frantic and futile effort to force Janet into a grade of society wholly beyond their means, Janet herself, her father's common-sense being dominant in her, promptly brought the struggle to a close her second season out by falling in love with young Gordon, with whom she was stalled for two hours in an elevator between the twelfth and thirteenth stories in the building where her father has his office, thus repeating in a way the first impromptu meeting between her own parents.

"Gordon, who by the way was a close friend of Carthy Latham's, though several years older, has both mental and physical attractions in an uncommon degree and a natural charm of manner that lingers behind him after he has gone, almost like a caress. Of course his means, though promising, are comparatively small, and Cordelia Martin received her second

social shock when the couple announced that, instead of avoiding domestic responsibility according to the present custom, taking a suite of two stuffy rooms and bath in a glittering uptown apartment hotel and dining conspicuously in the public restaurant, they had hired a scrap of a house in a street of 'Greenwich Village,' so remote that its name was merely a memory among the elect.

"The collapse of the maternal relative was completed when, the new ménage being started, she discovered that, company spreads implying extra help excepted, Neil comes home to his midday meal, which is called dinner, this method seeming the only one that solves the question of making the hours of work reasonable and life livable to their general maid, while at the same time it gives the master a chance for a break in his long day and a breath of fresh air in walking across town from office to home.

"The Gordons naturally attract many bright people around them of the class of brain workers who do not consider the chief use of mind to be as a weapon of either attack or defence; and among these are a little group of women whom I find charming. Seemingly they have not stepped outside the door of home shelter through any dissatisfaction with their

lot, but rather through a turn of circumstances go out from home that they may keep at least the home idea together; at once talented and self-reliant, the best womanly instinct never leaves them for a moment. Sitting by Janet's tea-table they are all graciousness, vivacity, and charm; nor do they forget that they are ladies or deem it necessary to couch the fact in words when, clad in rubbers and raincoats, they face the stress of weather in their daily routine. Now, as it happens, almost all of this little group are Southern women!

“Barbara dear, you Plymouth-rock-ribbed New Englander, do not bristle and take offence, but do you know that, placed as I am, a Knickerbocker on the border line between two almost distinct civilizations, those of the Massachusetts Bay and the Virginia Colony, I am growing to feel that New England as a whole has been too self-centred and that this trait has bred in some ways a narrow self-assertiveness in her women, especially those who ‘do things’? That, given equal breadth of development, their cult is pedagogic rather than at once cultured and feminine; and that while the women of the North gave their sons and lovers to pay the penalty of that political error, the Civil War, the Southern women also gave theirs, and their homes as well; and when

we meet them in a later generation and know how strong home love is within their hearts, we should doubly honour them. You must come down in the Easter holidays and see if I speak truly."

* * * * *

"Where did I leave off this afternoon? Ah, at the entrance of Ivory Steele. This young woman— she must be, I judge, about twenty-six— came to us two months ago with a letter of introduction from Sylvia and Horace Bradford; for, after graduating at one of the best-known co-educational colleges, she took the Rockcliffe course, being in the same year as Sylvia, and also coming under Horace's tuition. He wrote: 'She has one of the most perfectly logical minds that I have ever met with in man or woman, coupled with a rare critical insight which doubtless at first makes her appear cold and lacking in spontaneity. She has done some good literary work, and for the last year has been trying to establish herself independently in New York. For some reason which I cannot fathom, her home life in Seneca, where her people are in more than affluent circumstances, evidently jarred upon her, as I regretfully find is the case with so many of the college women of the day. She has three brothers, one of whom is married and, I believe, lives in the city. I had rather lost track of her for a

time, though she sent us a remembrance at the time of our wedding. A chance meeting in New York this winter has renewed the association, and she has been sending me some of her newspaper work in the line of dramatic and literary criticisms.

“Both you and your husband cannot fail to be interested in her, especially Mr. Cortright, as I know how many fictitious students he meets in the course of the year.’

“Sylvia writes more impetuously and from a different standpoint. I am glad to find that the dear child is recovering her girlish buoyancy, and I think that a summer with the kind old lady at Pine Ridge, where we can all be with her and have her one with us again, will not only establish her health but banish the cloud that her mother’s conduct cast upon her, that is, as much as will ever be possible.

“Ivory Steele is in New York, has been there nearly a year, and we did not know it until Horace met her at Christmas. Uncle Martin will love to talk books with her, but please do you be good to her, Aunt Lavinia, though it will not be easy; for, brilliant as she is, she is very hard to understand, and sometimes, when I used to look her in the eyes (she has strange eyes with topaz glints), there was a dreadful emptiness such as Undine might have had, and then

a flash like lightning that seemed to deny everything. It is hard to put it in the right words, but what I mean is she seems to have been educated in every way except through her heart, and in the affection that makes one love to do and bear for some one else and not for her own advantage. Of this she is all ignorant and cannot even comprehend it. Surely if any one can draw her out, it will be you and Uncle Martin, for no one could look at you two for a single hour and not know what comfortable love means.' (Mind you, Barbara, I do not consider this flattery, but precious appreciation coming from one so straightforward as my travelling companion and adopted niece.)

"With two such appeals, we could not but accord Ivory Steele a hearty welcome. Yet if I expected to meet any embarrassment or hesitancy in her meeting of new people, I was instantly set at my ease, so completely did she hold herself in check and dominate the situation. Dressed in trailing skirts and with an elegant yet quiet completeness that experience has taught me not to associate with the ordinary 'independent' woman, she interested us both so that the hour of her visit seemed but ten minutes; yet when she had gone we realized that, like a clever strategist, she had really led us to do

the talking, and that while we had told her much of ourselves, her own affairs had remained a closed book.

“She has not a single classic feature, and strange, dull black hair that frames her face like a sort of smoky cloud ; and yet she seemed to shoot a power of fascination like an electric current that could be turned on at will. I myself felt it, and after she had gone Martin started from a reverie, ejaculating to the fire, ‘Bless me ! I’ve seldom seen a more attractive woman !’

“Since then I have invited her here several times, and taken her with me to some pleasant houses ; but it was not until this afternoon that I learned, quite by accident, that in addition to work she does for a literary magazine syndicate, she is confidential clerk of Neil Gordon in his office at the *Morning Despatch*, and that it was to take this position and thereby, as she says, ‘gain experience,’ that she came to New York. Strange girl, she has not yet really begun to live, for I cannot suppose that she has ceased so to do. Nothing to her is a finality, but merely an experience ; and I’m watching hopefully for some little soft spot in her armour through which to reach her. I am quite anxious for you two to meet ; you pounce on character so by intuition. If you do not come to town, I shall ask her to visit me at Oaklands.

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“By the way, when I asked Neil Gordon of her capabilities, he answered heartily: ‘She is capital; knows what you wish done as if by second sight, never complains of the weather, and obliterates herself when she isn’t wanted, as if she owned a magic vanishing wand. That is why I prefer a woman to a man for confidential clerk; her work is so intelligently sympathetic; besides, a man of equal brain with Miss Steele and old enough to be responsible would expect a salary that he could marry on.’

“His words set me thinking, and father’s saying, that ‘a woman is never quite happy unless she is doing something for a man,’ came again to my mind. How far is everyday office propinquity and this innocent and hardly conscious sex sympathy that makes the work so acceptable fair to the woman at home? One thing I can realize fully, that it cannot be well for a wife to feel that another woman knows more of her husband’s private affairs than she herself. Also, the free woman errant goes out equipped for the day’s contest with all her best points accentuated. The woman domestic may have been up all night with a sick or restless child in addition to other unavoidable burdens that serve to try her. Can she be at her best, trim, manicured, and as faultless in hair and gown when her husband leaves for his office as

the woman he finds there? Is not this very contrast a challenge?

* * * * *

"I can see you wrinkle your forehead and say, 'What ails Lavinia Cortright?' as you glance ahead to see how much more there is of this moralizing. There is no more, — that is, at present; so will you please ask Evan, in his capacity as architect, to step in at his convenience? For we have decided to put the necessary changes at the Alton place, house and garden, into his hands, as we cannot make the move until the first of May.

"I wonder if life there will seem as it did three years ago? I hope so, though we cannot put the twins back into curls and kilts.

"Good night and good night.

"L. C.

"P.S. — Will you ask Dr. Russell if he knows of any place in your vicinity, perhaps in connection with the hospital, where a consumptive could be cared for in cheerful surroundings? There is a poor fellow in whom I am interested, for whose care I would gladly pay. The man is a German Hebrew apparently, a cobbler by trade, though there are many things about him that tell of a different origin, and for ten years

he has lived in that low brick building that litigation has withheld from improvement, squeezed in between the two sky-scrapers that obliterated my back yard, and threw his solitary window into dungeon-like shadow.

“When I worked in my garden I often found myself keeping time with the tap of his hammer, and in the early evening, from the extreme end of the yard, I could see the outline of his face silhouetted against the smoky lamp by which he worked. Sometimes on moonlight nights the hammer was silent, and instead the music of a violin separated itself from the city din and floated down to me, good music of the fatherland, replete with sentiment, and often played with a strange passion as if a soul was striving to escape from darkness into light. I used to fancy that he knew that I was listening, and that the consciousness made him less lonely; for I distinctly remember one May, when my garden was gay with tulips, hyacinths, pansies, and pink and white daisies, that he came out of the shadows quite into the window, and, standing close behind the flower-pots on the sill (for he kept flowers there throughout the growing season), played the *Spring Song* so that the very bricks and mortar seemed to vanish into the shade of trees, and birds and flowers were everywhere.

“When I returned from abroad as Sylvia’s chap-

erone and married, many things claimed my attention, and I was seldom in town during warm weather. Early this autumn, in the mild days after my return, I heard the tapping of the hammer once more, but this time to the accompaniment of a hacking cough. The sun had been built out, and there were no flowers on the window-sill. Martin and I, after some searching in the crooked street that backs us, found the rear building and the man. He recognized us but was at first very reticent, and, though fatally ill, could attend to his own needs, and evidently still had a slender store of money. No, he would not go to an institution, — a nameless terror crossed his face at the thought, — but did I know of some place in the country where he might go and see the sun once more when the warm weather came? He was never ill when he had the sunlight; and as for money, people must always wear shoes, and he could both make and mend.

“I promised to see what could be done, and I am convinced that some mystery perhaps underlies his condition. Martin laughs at my tendency to search out romance, but he himself noticed the man’s delicate, Mozart-like features, clear cut as a cameo, in spite of the tangled mass of jet-black hair and beard threaded with silver.

“L. D. C.

BUDGET FROM MRS. CORTRIGHT 77

“ P.S. (No. 2). I forgot to tell you that Josephus died yesterday of fatty degeneration of the heart, extreme old age, and insufficient exercise. I shall never have another cat! You see in his youth (for he lived fifteen years) Josephus was accustomed to take long walks from street to street over the roofs, along the fences, and then through out to Greenwich Avenue, under the alleyway by the cracker bakery. This archway was a favourite resort for his acquaintances, as the fish peddler, safe from street interruptions, did quite a thriving business among the neighbouring tenement-houses. To-day a flat-house fills the alley, and roof-walking has become impossible in a neighbourhood of transitions where one building is three stories high and the next perhaps thirteen. So what was left for a self-respecting cat but to live his life backward in sleeping by the kitchen fire ?

“ Part of my reason, by the way, for not replacing him is sentimental, but not all of it. Janet Gordon has promised me one of their Cocker spaniel pups. She says it will be so nice for us to have him in the country. Am I not a truly progressive woman to graduate from a cat to a dog in my later fifties ?

“ Finally,

“ L. D. C.”

V

FROM THE LADY OF THE BLUFFS (MRS.
T. JENKS-SMITH) TO BARBARA

“NEW YORK, 300 Park Lane, *March 4, 19—*.

“MY DEAR MRS. EVAN:—

“In spite of all my plans otherwise, I am back in New York, as you see. You might think from the heading on this paper that I have moved, but I haven't. Some of the lofties in this block thought the plain figures 7— Street too common, and even adding Central Park East didn't help much, for that would be standing in it with Central Park West, which is too big a bit of country to be kept *recherché*. Mrs. Ponsonby started the idea; she wanted to sell her house and thought it would bring more, I guess, having the swell street in London in mind. She coaxed a lot of us to have our paper stamped,—but the city wouldn't let the name be changed, afraid it would make a mix with Park Row and Park Place,—so we have to take it out calling it *Park Lane* among ourselves.

“I got your nice letter, written after poor Jenks

died, but somehow, my dear, I couldn't answer it; I've never done much on paper, you know. But I liked it better than any other (not that I had many real letters, they were mostly cards directed by private secretaries), for you took it for granted that I'd be sorry; and so I was and I am yet, and the six months is up to-morrow, so I can have my veil pinned back and not be bothered tossing it like a cow with a blinkboard every time I want to see straight.

"Jenks-Smith and I were never much on spooning, — it wasn't his way; but he liked me to have the latest thing and spend money to do him credit, and we were well used to each other, and when you once get your mind resigned and used to a man, it's hard to lose him; and though he left plenty of money behind, it doesn't make up.

"I thought I'd travel about for a year. We were just sailing to go to Homburg when that slump in steel came and, mixed with too much port (I always told him that he was too short-necked to drink port and that wine was out of fashion), got him excited for the last time.

"So I kept on and spent the fall in Italy. Well, Italy suits me best in Opera, — at long range, you know, and sort of boiled down and disinfected, as it were. Besides, the music in the churches

made me cry, which was what I came over to keep from doing ; and I didn't care for the pictures, they were so often hung in inconvenient places. I much preferred the copies we've got at home in albums, they're so much smaller and easier to see.

“When I got back to Paris in December, I expected I'd feel more at home. So I did for a while, and I thought I'd buy some clothes, but Parisian first mourning for widows is something frantic, even black borders on the under *lingerie*, and it gave me the horrors, though they will let you go into lavers for matinées at the year end. I stood it out through January, and then I crossed to London. My step-daughter wrote she would be there for a few weeks, and, as I control the property until her children come of age, I thought she might be friendly with me in view of an extra allowance ; so I accepted her suggestion and went to the same London Family Temperance Hotel ! (When the head of the family is not with her she is obliged to economize.)

“My dear, it was going from the frying-pan not into the fire, but into the ice-box ! Did you ever go to a family temperance hotel in London in the month of February ? No, of course not. Evan, being born English, would never dream of taking you to one — he's too shrewd — as he doesn't seem

to want to kill you off! It was dreadful! I missed dear Jenks-Smith all over again. *He* never went near family anythings anywhere! He always telegraphed ahead to the swellest place for rooms, and said, 'Free hand and everything American'; and they never misunderstood what he meant, no matter what language they spoke. Why, once we got left in autumn way up in Scotland and had to go to a sort of Inn place. Jenks-Smith ordered supper and a fire in the sitting room.

"'It's nae time for fires yet,' said the proprietor, 'not till first October.'

"'It's time for a thing when the man who can pay for it wants it,' said Jenks-Smith, with his hands in his pockets. Then they shut all the windows and doors in a hurry and built up such a fire that in half an hour it was so warm that the wax fruit and flowers in the gilt basket on the Bible table melted into tutti-frutti chewing-gum!

"But to go back to that family hotel. There was a fire in the dining room with about a quart of coal in it, and another in the drawing-room not half that size. The one in my bedroom was so small it fell through the grate before it was kindled, and the halls had no heat at all and were as draughty as a ship's ventilating funnels to boot.

“ ‘Put fires, large fires, in the hall and *everywhere*, and I will pay,’ I said to the steward. But he wouldn’t, and said, ‘The lady in the first floor front suite doesn’t think warm ’alls ’ealthy, hand the gentleman in the fourth floor back single ’as lived here forty years hand wouldn’t wish to see customs changed!’ My, but wasn’t everything *frappé*! When I was in bed, it made me shiver to think of getting up; and when I was up, the damp bed linen made me chilly at the thought of bed. Well, I managed to drag through the week until Sunday — that Sunday — ah, my dear, if you are ever left a widow, whatever you are called to go through, don’t try to spend a Sunday in a London family temperance hotel! To discourage the use of the drawing-room there was *no* fire, and the gas in the halls was turned out at nine o’clock!

“ Monday morning I put off for Liverpool, where I stayed at the nice cheerful railway hotel till the Wednesday’s steamer, and drew my step-daughter a handsome check for ‘good luck’ at living to get away, and now I’m home! It was just right, too, for there was business to be settled, not anything important, only to sign my name time out of mind. But when I tried doing it different, — out full, and then only initials, so’s it wouldn’t be so tedious, — the executor said I must always do it alike.

“‘Why not have a rubber stamp made then, and not bother me?’ said I.

“‘It wouldn’t be legal, and it could be stolen,’ he said; and so it might. You see a woman’s so thoughtless when she’s used to having somebody think for her,—that is, in all but the important things like clothes and dinner menus, and who’s to take in who!

“Now that I am at home among my own set, and warm and well fed, and have got some clothes that are not too awfully hearsey, I’ve discovered one thing—I can’t keep still! It makes me as seasick to stay at home and keep still as it did Jenks-Smith to cross the ocean!

“I do think, though, that everybody who has girls to bring up should have them broken in to keeping still when necessary, just as much as to dance and speak French.

“With me, I’ve always been on horseback, so to speak; there’s always been something doing from the time before pa struck it rich and made a railway-land deal with Jenks-Smith. Then out West there were cyclones and prairie fires and cattle round-ups, and after we were married we never dined alone, and sitting up late made you nice and sleepy all the forenoons, so the days weren’t too long. Now that

I'm at home so much I often wake up at eight o'clock in spite of closed curtains. I simply can't stand it! If I go to the Bluffs this summer it will be worse yet, — no coaching parties, no Mrs. Latham — I mean Mrs. Bell — to get up things! I shall go mad, and in an asylum even money is no consolation!

“ Now, my dear, couldn't *you* think up something for me to do, or tell me about some girl who would like to have a real good time given her — live with me, I mean? A nice, pretty one who would look well in things. I suppose I am at an age when I should be content with the company of the regulation poor relation and Poodle, though I believe we agreed long ago that it is to be a Boston Bull. But I'm not dopy enough for that yet, — only turned fifty and losing flesh, getting back my figure through worry, of course, when it's no good to me.

“ I don't care if the girl is poor, so long as she comes of regular parents. I could have had my Irish-English step-granddaughter Muriel, aged twelve, and welcome, but she is lean and freckled and wears half hose on her poor red legs, and awful spat-footed shoes, yet I know that she holds her nose at least two stories above me on account of that feather her penniless father can wear in his hat even when the Prince is about.

“ Dora Penfield (you know the trained nurse they

say was crossed in love), who manages the Babyland Hospital (Jenks-Smith was a director), suggested that I turn one of our places at the Bluffs into a Fresh-air Home for babies or shop-girls, and amuse myself by doing good. I dare say I may after a bit, but I shall have to be led up to it by easy stages, like a green horse to an automobile ; just now the very idea makes me balky !

“ Do think up something for me, and find me a tenant for the Latham place, for I shall *have* to stay at the Bluffs, I know, to be near by town for business. And, by the way, if you know of anybody who wants to hire an old-fashioned cottage like the one Lavinia Cortright has bought of the Alton estate, I also have one to rent ! It is the Bacon farm that fills out the corner of the cross-road that runs by the Latham place over toward Pine Ridge. Now that there is a trolley on the North Highway it would be very handy for any one to get from there to Oaklands Depot or to Bridgeton.

“ By-by, and don't forget to keep in mind

“ Your afflicted friend,

“ HATTIE JENKS-SMITH. ”

Truly, without any effort at imagination on my part, my journal is turning to a Wonder Book !

Jabez Crandon's daughter under my roof playing cribbage with father this minute, and all of us bewitched with her! Lavinia Cortright having passages at arms with the new woman errant, and the Lady of the Bluffs beseeching her whom she once called the "comfortably poor Barbara" to find her occupation and a motive for her life!

I wonder if — but there is no use in wondering; the only way to answer my own questions will be to live this combination out, be grateful, and pray that no one may have his or her feelings hurt, for it is all so interesting.

Now I must go down and tell the boys that they really must come to bed.

VI

UNDER THE EAVES

March: The First Sunday. Earth unlocked her doors last night for the first time since November. This morning the last trace of ice disappeared from the river, and the eyes of the little pools and springs are open wide and clear once more, all free, with no crystal sleep dust of winter lurking in their corners.

How quickly the earth forgets the touch of the frost and yields to the sun! It is the same with ourselves; the touch of suffering passes much more quickly than the memory of happiness. What boon companions are the sun and wind at this season; together they rise to bring the day, and together they draw it after them into the shadows. The sun frees the frozen moisture to the leavening of the soil, and the wind gathers it up and scatters it afar.

The little, fragrant white violets have begun to bloom before they have had time to lift their heads, and they lie close to the earth bosom in smiling content. This afternoon there came a sound from

the south more thrilling even than the whisperings of the first fox-sparrow to those who are waiting for spring. At first, a rustling as of the wind among the matted reed beds, and then the rhythmic purring of the hylas began, the first voice from the marshes that will soon be teeming with every form of life; and lo! in a moment the sound falls backward again and blends an accompaniment to the martial solo of a red-winged blackbird.

To-morrow it may snow or the sun withdraw and leave the wind to keep his usual March patrol—but that is no reason why we may not thank God for to-day!

Sukey Crandon took the early evening train back to Bridgeton to be ready for her school work in the morning, after waking us up and making us all the happier for her coming. Not that I mean that we were any of us physically sleepy, for, by being a commuter, Evan has escaped the heavy spectacle of a city middle-class family after the usual midday Sunday dinner. Here, if we do not really wish to go out to walk of our own volition, something usually requires attention, or else the dogs insist upon an excursion and banish the creeping paralysis of an afternoon nap. Sukey Crandon's awakening was to some facts and enthusiasms of everyday

girl life, not new or in any wise remarkable in itself perhaps, but surprising to me because I had not realized that anything so natural and direct could possibly emerge from the roof of the Reverend Jabez Crandon, who is certainly a fair type of the objectionable religious fakir!

This afternoon, when the boys prepared for the usual walk, including us as a matter of course, I saw Sukey glance at me rather wistfully, and so I suggested that they should go alone, while we visited my attic retreat, looked at the view, and had the dish of woman's talk about which the dearest of men laugh so much, yet to which, if by chance they overhear, they pay such strict attention.

There is not so much space in the attic for fantastic shapes and day-dreams to lurk as of yore. The desk and sofa and open wood-stove remain, but boy life has pervaded it all very thoroughly, so that I have to move about carefully not to work woful harm between intricate arrangements for doing circus tricks, the printing-press, a small carpenter's bench, and every conceivable sort of dried thing from bunches of cat-tail flags, that without warning turn into fluff and powder my hair, to wands of witch-hazel nuts that have kept going off at intervals all winter with the reports of

toy pistols, and various cocoons, and chrysalids in flower-pots of earth that will soon be liberating creepers, flyers, and crawlers each after its kind.

But who would not rather stub her toes against queer lumps of rocks and have her hair impaled by twigs, in her girlhood's sanctum, than deprive children of the private and "very own" retreat of an attic to keep their gathered treasures, where they may come and dream day-dreams, and keep these also unmolested? Since the boys came, one of the sad things to me, in going to New York to visit the Cortrights, is to look at the great, flat-houses rising everywhere block upon block and then at the little children in the street, so many of whom must live in them and perhaps be born and die without truly knowing what home means, for it cannot be really having a home to live where nothing but the purely material things of life can have place, and there is nowhere to keep anything until they grow to love it and form associations that act as anchors to future drifting. No big, quiet nursery where the sun peeps in and winks at them every morning and where they can stow away their little daylight fantasies in nooks and corners to comfort them when they wake up in the night and it seems long.

And to think that there are city children, and not

the children of poor people either, who can never have room for a dear old rocking-horse to take them on imaginary gallops all over the world until his tail has been loved off and nearly all his mane, or who may feel the bliss of finding some morning that a litter of fascinating kittens has mysteriously joined comfortable brindled Susan Jane in the big basket in the laundry closet!

* * * * *

Sukey sank down on the old sofa with a sigh of content, laughing when she went much farther than she expected, owing to the relaxed springs, and, after glancing about the attic and out the window over the western hills, leaned back and closed her eyes with a little quick drawing in of the breath.

“My air-castle always has an attic in it where no one can come without giving ‘fair warning,’ because the stairs are steep and intruders clump and stub the toes of their shoes. Under the eaves, too, there is always a little trunk covered with spotted hair, and in it are bundles of letters and miniatures all belonging to happy love affairs, and not any of the kind that come too late to prevent misunderstanding. Why, Cousin Barbara!” — at this moment she opened her eyes and gazed fixedly under the eaves, — “there is the little trunk!”

“Yes,” I replied, leaving the desk and sitting down beside her, “and in it are letters of a happy love even though it was but short. That was my mother’s trunk covered with spotted hair seal, and before her day it had held letters and trinkets a full hundred years!”

“Your mother’s letters?” said Sukey, her clear eyes growing soft and then dim. “You will understand then if—may I tell you a little about my mother and ask you some questions? She died when I was twelve, and though Jane is older she does not *remember* the things I do, and I’m so hungry to speak to some one who will understand and not say that I am foolish, for Mrs. Lavantia Blair, mother’s cousin, who sent me to college, is quite provoked with me for one reason, and a wholly different one makes it unpleasant for me to go home—I mean to where father and the girls live—for Sundays, but as you know about that we need not discuss it.

“There is so much to tell that I hardly know where to start; in fact, the beginning of it happened long before I was born, when father, who was then a bachelor and a commercial traveller, was caught in a railway accident and ‘converted,’ as they call it. I can never understand any one being frightened into

loving God any more than I can understand a person being argued into it. It seems to me that it must come like a flood of sunlight and warm and take possession of you whether you will or no.

“ You see that, moving from parish to parish as we have, I have seen so much of the forced sort of religion that I have no sympathy with the people who try to spread it. I mean the kind where people pick out all the wrathful texts, forgetting all there is about home and love, and try to bring God down to their own mean levels and, for purposes of petty tyranny, making people do and believe their own reading of what God never meant! Of course you know, cousin Barbara, I think that savage nations should be kept from cruel practices and taught, if possible, the laws of health, but when it comes to what is called ‘converting’ them and the un-Christian feelings of many who think they are called to do it, I am filled with horror!

“ God is big enough and grand enough to know that when the heathen make sacrifices and decorate their idols, it is *Him* they mean, only their way of expression is crude. I truly believe that the Church of Rome is right in one thing, — those whom they send to teach and preach are unmarried! When Christ said, ‘Go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles,’ he

said it to a sturdy group of unmarried men; he did not mean married men to drag delicate women around the earth, even though they are emotionally willing, and children to be scattered about homeless to become objects of charity!"

I must say that I was startled at Sukey's vehemence, even though I knew the extremity of her provocation; and I suppose my thought reflected itself in my face, for after a moment's pause she said:—

"I am afraid that I have said too much, but the words would come and, after all, they partly explain what I most need your help about. You see when mother married father she was only twenty, not half his age, and, giving herself an equal sacrifice to him and what he called his work, accompanied him to India. Jane was born there, and after a year father was recalled and settled at Norton, not very far from Pine Ridge where Grandpa Bacon's farm was.

"When mother was thirty-five she died, worn out with roving and pinching, leaving us eight behind. I was only twelve then, the middle girl, but I remember as well as if it were only yesterday how she called me to her and said: 'Daughter,' — *she* never called me Susanna, — 'when you grow up, no matter what happens or what people tell you, remember that

nothing on the face of the earth can take the place of home to a woman, for to her heaven itself is a home of many mansions. Try to keep your sisters together, do not let their natural affections be trampled upon, and, above all, do not marry until you are sure what love is.'

"Of course we all knew very early in life that we must shift for ourselves, girls and boys alike. Father married your Aunt Lot, and I must say that we older ones felt quite as sorry for her as for ourselves. We were a dreadful mob in some ways and appallingly numerous; besides, a middle-aged step-mother comes into a family under great disadvantages, awkwardly down the chimney, as it were, instead of gracefully through the door. She has passed the age of elasticity, and her 'sense of duty' seems to take the form of regretting that her predecessor was not a better disciplinarian.

"When I was nearing sixteen, Mrs. Blair, from whom no one had heard since mother died, turned up and looked us over. Lois was thirteen, in the long-legged, wild colt, freckled stage; Jane, over seventeen, painfully shy and impossible to draw out, was immersed in housework the moment school was over. I think Mrs. Blair was attracted toward me because she was unhesitatingly told that I was way-

ward, and it seems her own career has always been considered such by her family. At any rate she offered to have me fitted for Barnwell College at a good preparatory school and see me through the course, for she believes that women should have not only equal but the same education and rights as men, and wished that I might not be handicapped in my life-work for lack of 'mental discipline.' Of course I was delighted. At sixteen 'equal rights' has an alluring sound; it does not occur to one then that most of the 'equal rights' for women mean that to their own peculiar burdens they are to have the right to add self-support and the heavier responsibilities of man.

"I delved away as hard as possible and entered at a little past seventeen, full of enthusiasm. Of course there was a great deal about the life that was fascinating, and the change from great restraint to almost entire liberty turned my head completely and swept me along until the beginning of my junior year, when suddenly values seemed to readjust themselves. Some few of the girls had real talent and expected to follow definite professions; the rest were divided into what might be called the gigglers and the grumblers.

"The gigglers, as girls, were pleasant and jolly enough, and in a decorative sort of way really added

to the reputation of the college, by having pretty rooms and smart clothes and appearing thoroughly feminine, except when basket-ball turned us all into excited little brutes. Their sustenance was not of books, but the society of the opposite half of the co-ed institution, with whom they could be on the very free and easy terms that no other walk in life would possibly tolerate.

“I believe that some people, like Cousin Lavantia Blair, think that to have men and women aged from seventeen to twenty-two study together refines the men; it may possibly, but I think it is almost always wholly at the girls' expense. If outsiders could only realize the tangled-up things they call love-affairs that exist between the co-eds who know nothing of each other's home surroundings and who could not possibly care for each other under other conditions! There is one thing, however, that any thoughtful girl can learn from this random mixture of opposite sexes, and that is what love is *not*; and also that any relation between a man and woman that makes them at once companions and rivals is not only false but dangerous.

“As far as learning went, the gigglers simply wriggled through, honours being pretty evenly divided between those who had come of their own will to enjoy a four years' lark, and those carrying out some

parental theory of giving their boys and girls an equal chance.

“The grumblers were mostly quite dignified young women who took themselves and the world very seriously, pleased with themselves, but usually having some real or theoretical grievance against their surroundings, or more particularly against their families. Some of them were socially dissatisfied with the condition of their birth and seemed to share the idea, that a lot of men have, that the mere fact of their having taken a college course would brand them as ‘cultured’ and cause the world to recognize them. These were much easier to get along with than the others, who felt that, though generally misunderstood, they had a mission to reform the world, always acting as if everything they said and did was of the greatest importance, or as if the axle of the universe was slightly bent and they were bound either to straighten it or prove that according to advanced thought wheels shouldn’t be forced to revolve on axles.

“It seems strange to me, who have always longed so for a real permanent home, that many of the girls who had lovely houses and parents with means to give them almost anything reasonable they desired seemed bent upon turning their college life into a sort of wall to separate them from their

families; as if to be away during the four years after seventeen or eighteen was not a break enough at best, because when they are over, one's very first youth is gone and one needs to have gained something very special to make up for the time of separation.

"Of course there were many of the girls who had come to college, as I had, without any particular bent or talent, but to learn something that would make it easier for them to earn a living; and of these, those who had some one special to do for, or the ambition to help keep home together on their return, were the most content.

"When I was sophomore, there was a young woman beginning her senior year who did not exactly belong to either of these groups, and in a way held rather aloof from the others, associating more with the professors and their families; and yet, strange to say, she took the trouble to exert her gift of fascination over me. Of course we were widely separated by the difference in our college class work, and yet in the gymnasium, field, and in many little festivities, we seemed to be constantly thrown together. We both roomed outside the college, and when Ivory Steele (that was her name, and ivory-white was the exact colour of her complexion, and ivory-black of her hair) found that I had a scrap of a bedroom in

the top of the house where she had a three-roomed suite, she insisted that I should share her library with her, and put the matter in such a way that I could not refuse. Not that I wanted to refuse, for I was dreadfully lonely, — there were so many of us at home, — and besides my room was on the side of the house that caught all the lake winds, and I nearly perished every time I tried to study there when winter set in.

“At first Ivory Steele never said a word about herself or family, merely talked about college happenings, books, work, etc. She was taking among other things a special course in physiology, and I thought perhaps that she intended becoming a physician, especially as Dr. Roberts, who also came from Seneca, her home, and was taking a post-graduate course in the medical school as well as lecturing to us, coached her between whiles. Of course there were girls, all the gigglers in fact, who insisted that Ivory was engaged to Dr. Roberts because she wore a diamond ring upon the left third finger, and said that he had taken his post-graduate course at Barnwell just to be near her. But I thought this was nonsense, because she had a great many trinkets and rings and changed them almost daily, and, if anything, he was more patient and attentive to Grace Farwell, who was taking a mixed

course of sociology and medicine to fit her for College Settlement work in New York, to which she is going to devote her life, in spite of leaving an invalid mother out there. Then, too, Ivory did not care for men at all, and never missed a chance of saying that it was all a mistake that men and women were more or less dependent on each other, and that to-day women are everywhere proving their separateness and that they can associate on the same plane and follow business careers as consistently as men.

"As for Dr. Roberts, I did think he liked her, but probably because she was so clever and he was not a man to make a fuss about any one, — big and a bit awkward, with a good frank smile, but terribly in earnest. The 'born faithful' sort who, if he says a thing once means it always and never repeats himself.

"Presently, however, I found that Ivory was only taking this course for what she called 'the experience,' which was always her reason for doing everything; while in spite of the fact that she was devoted to her class work and every one spoke of her wonderful intellectual grip, she was always restless.

"Just before the Christmas holidays I accidentally heard that she planned, after leaving Barnwell, to go to Rockcliffe for a course in literature, and after taking a certain degree meant to follow the profession

of writer and critic. While immediately after this, much to my surprise, she asked me to go home with her for the holidays!

“This was a perfect joy to me, because as the journey home was so expensive I was to stay at Barnwell and console myself with the box of cookies and pies Jane promised to send. The dear thing must have used up every cent she could scrape together that year for expressage, for she never sent a box without prepaying it, while lots of the girls’ friends nearly ruined them by sending all sorts of useless trash ‘collect,’ when the poor things were on the very last week of frayed and tattered allowances.

“Oh, those cookies! I can see and smell them now; and when Lois helped in the making they were an infallible cure for homesickness. What did Lois do? She used to make faces on the big round cookies by aid of a sharp knife, currants, and bits of citron, for me to guess who they represented, and she was so clever at it that I almost always could, for Tom’s nose turned up and Jane’s eyes opened wide and round, and Rob’s were long and closed into slits when he laughed, and the corners of his mouth turned up to meet them, while the sexton, who was all beard, was solid currants up to his eyes, and our house cat had a nick out of one ear, and the church cat was

crop-eared! Of course, Cousin Barbara, this sounds very foolish to you, but did you ever go away to school or college? No? Then you cannot even dream what it means to get something that has been made by your people, even if you have never stayed long enough in one spot to have more than put out a few roots and had them pulled up again."

(I told Sukey about my going out for the first time over to the old world for two years with Evan, and that even being with him, how precious were the leaves and flowers and curls of Bluff's hair or bits of grass from the song sparrow's nest in the great white rose-bush, that came in father's letters. Verily love of home is sometimes a pang as well as a pleasure, but every love that is worthy to endure must have this reflex to seal it. When Sukey saw how entirely I understood her, she slid off the sofa and, getting hold of both my hands, rested her resolute chin upon my knees as Ian does when he has been having an unusually troublesome time with his lessons or his school-fellows, and struggles up these attic stairs with a wonderful assortment of griefs and wrongs, real or imaginary, which, being deposited in my lap, we proceed together to sort out and rectify, he never for an instant letting go of my hand until everything is settled satisfactorily.)

VII

HER PARENTS

“IN addition to being glad to spend the holidays in a big comfortable home, for so I supposed it to be, though Ivory had no pictures of it about her rooms as almost everybody else had, I was quite anxious to see her parents, for she seemed to have rather a grudge against them, especially her mother, saying that they two had not an idea in common. It was so odd and jarring to hear a woman of over twenty, as she must have been then, speak so about her very own mother to one almost a stranger, especially when there was absolutely no need of it. Before I graduated, however, I had become used to hearing girls criticise their parents, as they did every other relation in life; and the pity of it is, that the training in freedom of expression that college is supposed to give only seems to make them keener at it, one of Ivory's favourite arguments being, ‘As we do not choose our own parents, why should we be obliged to be responsible for them, or have our own actions and careers limited by their whims?’

“When we arrived at the station bound for Seneca, on the Friday that began the two weeks’ holiday, Dr. Roberts was already there and led us to seats he had saved in the car, while he went to attend to Ivory’s baggage, my belongings being conveniently packed in a suit case. He was more talkative and less reserved than usual, and though I shared the seat with Ivory, he sat immediately behind and, leaning over, spoke freely of home happenings, calling her by her first name. He did not do this in the formality of college, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should, as they lived in the same city and had known each other all their lives.

“‘What do you think of your father’s plan to leave the slope and build on Lake View Avenue? It is certainly a finer location in all respects, as well as nearer his factory; but I like the old house and the rural half of the town, and then, too, if you remember, your house once belonged to my grandfather, and I was born there!’

“‘I like the old house, also, and do not remember any other, though I must have been two or three when we moved into it. No, I cannot endure the idea of living in one of those awful heaps of stone and brick on Lake View Avenue, each one striving

to outdo the other in ugliness and number of stained-glass windows; but, as I do not expect ever to be at home, except possibly for a few weeks at a time, it does not matter much after all.'

"'I've a great notion to buy the old house myself,' Dr. Roberts continued; and, though I was looking out the window, I could feel that he was gazing fixedly at Ivory and watching the effect of his words.

"'I shall finish at Barnwell this spring, spend another summer in the London hospitals, and be ready to take up Lewis's practice and settle down next autumn. As he has always lived on the slope, what better location for me? Why do you not coax the old folks to take an English trip this summer? It would do them a world of good to go with you!'

"'Possibly it might, but my arrangements are already made,' she answered in a perfectly even tone, as if she were discussing an affair of no moment whatever. 'Grace Farwell and I plan to spend the summer together in Canada; we both have work to do, as she goes to New York and I enter Rockcliffe in the fall!'

"I could feel that Dr. Roberts gave a slight start, but his next words explained it.

"'I thought that Miss Farwell was going to the seaside on the Maine coast with her mother this sum-

mer! I know that the doctor has ordered it for Mrs. Farwell as the one hope,—‘an entire change of air with pleasant surroundings,’ as it is worded! I know, too, that the poor patient woman has been awfully lonely all these four years, but would not say a word, and to go away from her this summer when her life is almost hanging in the balance — my God, it is too cruel!’

“I did not know that Dr. Roberts could flash up so suddenly, and the change rather frightened me, though I admired its effect upon him. Ivory’s voice, however, just then would have chilled any one.

“‘If Grace Farwell’s society means so much to her mother, why did not Mrs. Farwell make herself more necessary to Grace before she became an invalid? Trained nurses can be found only too glad to go to the seashore and devote themselves, without its being necessary for Grace to set aside her career!’

“‘Do you really think, now that the time has come to face it, she will finally throw over her home and the chance to make it a gathering place for her brothers, to go into this experiment in charity,— for such the thing must always be to one of her mercurial temperament?’

“‘Certainly, and why not, please? Have we not threshed out this matter often enough that we must

begin again? Her brothers may stay about home or they may marry at any time that suits them; why should she give up her plans for uncertainty? You might as well ask me to give up mine of going to Rockcliffe, and you know well that is dangerous ground!' If any one had any doubt of Ivory Steele's determination, a glance at her face would have done away with it; yet in another minute the cloud passed off and she half turned about and gave Dr. Roberts one of her brightest glances, and began to talk to him in her sweet low voice, enveloping a fellow-student who joined him in the conversation, for though she at once presented me I felt antiquated and out of it, and preferred to look at the flying landscape and think.

"Ivory often puzzled me so I could not make her out, though in many ways I'm ages older than my years, for the children of movable ministers see, hear, and experience a great deal of trouble and learn of mixed motives of which outsiders do not dream. There seemed to be two beings in Ivory, — the one cold, clear-headed, and cynical, verbally regarding man as an incubus, and the general planning of the universe an unpardonable error that she could not forgive, — the other all woman, one who thought out her clothes to the utmost detail; and wholly un-

consciously changed in attitude, voice, and expression the moment a man, be he fellow-student or gray-haired professor, came in sight, posing and trailing her skirts about like the most uncompromising of the gigglers, but doing it so well that she always dominated the situation for the time being, until we girls of the awkward type felt as if we were simply a compound of red knuckles, big feet, and sharp elbows left alive through mercy and not by our own deserts.

“When we arrived at Seneca a spruce depot rockaway, with well-fed horses and a pleasant-faced coachman, very neat though not in livery, met us, and we began our uphill drive. Dr. Roberts looked as if he expected to be asked to go with us, but Ivory, either without thinking or else by design, piled the things on the front seat so that there was no room, and he boarded a trolley, going apparently in the same direction.

“I could not understand whether or no she was disappointed that none of her family came to meet her. I knew that one brother was married and away, but one was in the same business as her father and there was a younger boy at school.

“‘There is the house!’ she said presently, when in the course of twenty minutes the yards in front

of the dwellings increased until side gardens also became the rule, and the rockaway drove in where a low rambling house with wide porches stood surrounded by trees and set well back in the corner lot.

“As we stopped under the porch at the side door, it opened and a rather short, stoutish man of sixty, clean shaven, with small, bright eyes, came out, and, picking his way carefully down the steps, for they were quite icy, opened the door before I, who was on that side, could disentangle myself from the wraps. He wore a blue quilted house coat and felt slippers, and threw away the cigar he had been smoking, in order to free his hands, as the handle of the carriage door was stiff. As I stepped out Ivory freed herself and followed, introducing me as she did so. Her father greeted her with a hearty kiss, and turning to me shook me warmly by both hands, saying: ‘Well, Ivy’ (a nickname she particularly disliked), ‘so you’ve brought a friend with you, which is the right thing, and I wish you’d do it oftener! Mother, here’s daughter and her friend, Miss Crandon, though I guess we’ll begin and call her Susie at the start; it’ll make her feel more at home!’

“Then he began pulling at the bags and getting

them into the house, while Mrs. Steele stood in the doorway looking half pleased and half frightened (I often noticed that she wore this expression, as if she were not quite sure how to act whenever Ivory came near her). Ivory greeted her rather carelessly and to my surprise passed into the house barely pausing to kiss her, for though she was not of the emphatic roly-poly type of her husband, she had an anxiously kind face and what would have been a comfortable, motherly figure if the dressmaker had not over-boned her gown, which was also too elaborate and precise. At any rate she had only touched my hand when something moved me to kiss her, it was such a temptation, this going into a nice, cheerful, comfortable home and having somebody's mother, even if it wasn't my own, greet me on the threshold. She didn't seem a bit surprised, but led me into the sitting room across the hall,—not a formal place, but a room with a window full of plants, some low chairs near the open fire, a big work-basket and a sewing-machine in one corner, and a canary singing above the plants, the bottom of his cage hidden in a tarlatan petticoat.

“ ‘Why is that sewing-machine down here?’ ” was Ivory's first question, as she glanced about.

“ ‘The Sewing Society is meeting regularly with

me this winter,' answered her mother, hastily; 'we accomplish so much more than if we move about, and having the machine for the long seams is a great help. Not that we have given up reading out loud, — oh, no! each member chooses a selection week by week, though we kept right on with Mrs. Wiggs until we finished her, and then we felt as if we had lost a friend. You see she was so like Mrs. McCarthy over on Railway Street, for whom we are sewing, — you remember her, Ivory?' — and then she turned so as to include me, — 'she was Rose Kelly, our general worker the last year that we only kept one, and she married McCarthy, who died when her sixth child was a baby; and then when she took in the four orphans her brother left, you see her family grew rather large for one lone woman to sew for!'

"'What could she expect? She certainly has no one to blame but herself,' said Ivory, who looked annoyed and had a little red spot in the middle of each cheek, a very rare occurrence.

"'Blame? Why, Ivory, there is no blame; she couldn't know that her husband would die, and she's had no babies since; and as for taking her brother's little ones, who better than she should know how hard it is to be homeless and try to keep them all together? But, speaking of reading aloud, it was my

day this week and I tried to find some of the books you mentioned in your last letter, but they didn't have them in the library; and so, as a great many friends were inquiring about you and your work and plans, I read them your letter, all about the chances women have to-day that their parents did not know; and they were all so pleased, and Mrs. Forshay said it was truly eloquent and sounded just like a sermon,—a sermon without a text,—and that she noticed that the last minister who exchanged with ours did not use a text, but gave out what he called a "Topic of the Day."

"Dear Mrs. Steele went on as innocently as a child prattling, but Ivory got up as if she could stand no more, and, without hurrying, — she never hurries, not even if she makes us all miss a car when we take trolley rides from college down to town and back, — she left the room, asking me if I did not wish to come upstairs.

"I turned to follow, but her father detained her by asking: 'Where is Roberts? Didn't he come on with you? Won't he be up to supper to-night? His sister has been preparing the house for the last week until I think this morning, if it had not frozen so hard, she would have had the sidewalk scrubbed. Didn't say that he would be up? Well, what need to put it

in words? though however you manage to keep up this airy don't-care way of yours about your sweetheart so long, Ivy, is more'n I can see! But perhaps you know best in not giving in too soon, for you'll have to some day, — John Roberts is no half-way man!

“By this time Ivory was upstairs, but as her father turned back into the room he faced me, and noticed probably that I wore a surprised look, for I had not learned the necessity of concealing my feelings as I have since I've been teaching school” — (the dear, frank child couldn't conceal her thoughts and impulses for a kingdom).

“‘What!’ he exclaimed, holding me quizzically at arm's length by the shoulders, ‘didn't you know that Ivy here is engaged to Dr. Roberts, and been so near a year? Well, I believe it, she is an odd girl, though I don't know where she gets it from in my family, unless it's through an aunt of my father's who was crossed in love in her youth, and when she grew old thought she was a widow, put on black, and had a big stone, with no name on it, set up in a cemetery lot she bought and used to take posies out to it! But, come to think, that can't be, because it's not in the straight line, and Ivy is just the other way about, — doesn't act as if she'd give herself a chance to be a widow!’

“Here Mrs. Steele interrupted him with a discreet little cough and a hesitating ‘Why, Samuel!’ and he returned to Dr. Roberts once more.

“‘Yes, John Roberts and she were always play-mates, and everybody said that they were made for each other; yet I don’t believe, as far as Ivy is concerned, the thing would have come to the settling point, but John is straight up and down and wouldn’t allow people to wonder and gossip about his affairs any more than I would about Ivy’s, so the engagement leaked out; but Ivy succeeded in getting a fool promise from Roberts that he would not interfere with her plans for college and having experience and all that, and would not insist upon the marriage until it was her wish to have it so. I didn’t think that he would hold out a year, but it looks as if he’d keep his word,— he always has, so far, to everybody he’s dealt with. As for Ivy, I don’t believe she’ll hold out longer than to graduate, for all her talk and plans for going to Rockcliffe,— why should she? She thinks there is no one like Roberts, for all her freeze-out ways!

“‘And, Susie,’ he added, stopping me once more as I made a great effort to go upstairs, not wishing to be a listener to what Ivory had not chosen to tell me, ‘if you could say a good word for us to Ivy

about how we wish she'd come back after she graduates and let us get acquainted with her again, we'd take it as a great favour, mother and I. The new factory, t'other side of town, is all working well (Steele & Son, Builders of Fine Carriages of All Kinds, you know), and I've got plans for a fine house as a surprise, — not that she'll care for it, because she likes this one as much as she can anything, but —' (here his voice sank to a whisper) 'it will leave this free by and by for her and John, for I know he wants it when he settles down to practice.'

"A look of sympathy was all I dared give him, but I felt so sorry that I could have put my arms around his neck and hugged him with all his affectionate garrulity, — yes, hugged them both! Everything about the house was so pleasant and comfortable, they so hungry for their daughter; and yet somehow she was educating herself into a misfit, and the very swing of her skirt seemed out of place.

"Ivory did not say much as we made ourselves neat after the journey, and when a tidy maid came up to wish her 'safe home' and say supper was ready, we found Dr. Roberts below as if his coming was a matter of course.

"Before the meal was over I felt quite at home, for Ivory had relaxed into one of her rare, roguish moods

that made her doubly fascinating, and the conversation flowed in safe channels. When we left the table Ivory and the Doctor drifted toward the piano, which stood in the corner of the square open hallway, and I followed the elders into the sitting-room, where Mr. Steele presently made himself acquainted with my history from birth, and seemed delighted when I told him how much I should really like to visit the new factory with him, for I always do love to see how things are made.

“Mrs. Steele left the room presently, and I could see her busying herself with the maid in the dining room, drawing curtains, and setting things to rights. Housekeeping and all its details were the very breath of life to her, — I could tell by the caressing way in which she touched the delicate teacups, — and I thought perhaps she had done so much herself, thinking to spare Ivory trouble, that it was one of the reasons that she had occupied herself with other things.”

(It is not that alone, charitable little Sukey, but the trouble is that so many simple-minded middle-class parents — and I've seen not a few about here — are often awed by the mere veneer of learning that their children acquire, — for real knowledge is humble, — and stand in apologetic awe of their offspring instead of commanding loving respect by their own attitude,

thus reversing the relationship to the hurt of both, and worse yet to the home instinct.)

“When Mrs. Steele returned, Ivory was playing and singing softly, and, as we gathered near to listen, she sang one or two little German songs in her velvety contralto, and then some old-fashioned English ballads, as if to humour her parents, who instantly brightened up, Mr. Steele keeping time eagerly with both hands on his chair arms. Then she arose and abruptly closed the piano.

“‘One more, this,’ said Dr. Roberts, laying a detaining hand on the piano lid, as he picked up *The Song of the Soul*, which proved to be some verses selected from a poem of Whittier’s set to music.

“I thought that she was about to refuse, for she stiffened and glanced across the room to where I sat, and then reseating herself played a few bars of a weird sort of accompaniment impossible to forget, and sang a single verse of the song:—

“‘Folly and fear are sisters twain,
One covers her eyes;
The other peoples the dark inane
With spectral lies!’”

“‘Lord, but that’s a gloomy song; I’m glad it’s short,’ said her father, without looking round, as she came to the fire; but I saw an expression on Dr.

Roberts's face that, though it only rested there for a moment, I must remember even as I do the fascination of her eyes."

Here Sukey broke off suddenly, and after a few moments continued:—

"The vacation passed quickly enough, and I grew very fond of Mr. and Mrs. Steele, and should have had a happy visit there except I felt all the time that they were drawing me one way and she, Ivory, the other, and that somehow a feeling of resentment seemed to rise in her against me if I went about the house with her mother and enjoyed seeing her linen closet and pantries, and I do so love linen closets, with the sheets and pillow-slips all in even rows, plenty and plenty of them, and I couldn't help thinking how Jane would have enjoyed that kitchen pantry, with the glass rolling board and pin, and everything kept in nice blue-and-white jars.

"Then, too, Ivory never came to breakfast with us; she said that she had enough of early rising at college, and she wanted me to have my breakfast in bed, too, but I simply couldn't; I was wide awake! The idea of eating crumbs all over the lovely pink quilted spread, as if I were ill, and staying in bed until ten, while my hosts were up and Mr. Steele off to the factory at nine!

“ When we returned to Barnwell I began to study very hard to try to combine parts of my sophomore and junior years ; and I had a chance to take a better room in another building, so I saw less and less of Ivory and, though after she graduated she wrote me once or twice and sent me a picture postal now and then, I've not really heard from her since she left Rockcliffe, and I think that all I was to her was a sort of ‘ experience, ’ to be put away with many others and labelled perhaps, if at all, — ‘ Homespun girl experiment, not successful ! ’

“ You may wonder why I tell you all this, Cousin Barbara, and what it has to do with me ; but the reason is that until I saw her, and how she had come to feel, I thought if I could only get all the book learning I wanted I should be perfectly happy and be able to keep the girls together with me somehow. Then I saw that I, too, must watch out not to grow into a misfit, and that is why I have had to disappoint Mrs. Blair. Still, ” with a sigh, “ I do wish that I knew something about Ivory and Dr. Roberts. I'm afraid they are not married yet, or I should have heard of it, and this time that I am telling of was nearly six years ago. What, do you know her ? Yes, I see in your face that you do ! ” she cried, springing to her feet.

“Only this,” I said, “that Ivory Steele, still unmarried, is in New York doing newspaper work and other writing, besides being confidential secretary to the literary editor of the *Morning Despatch*. I do not know her at all, having seen her but once, and hearing her name for the first time by chance this very week.”

“But you saw her only once and did not forget her?”

“Only once, and I have not forgotten.”

VIII

HEART'S DESIRE

March 12th. Snowing in great soft clinging flakes this morning, but then the weather doesn't mean anything particular by it, — merely a brief show of power, even as it feels the sun breaking its grip, a little recoil, a flash of indecision like a fresh outburst in the middle of a reconciliation scene on the stage.

The daffies, in the protected corners, grown bold with experience, do not shiver and droop as they did a week ago, but face the weather bravely in deepening tints of gold and green. All day yesterday a pair of red-tailed hawks were sweeping the sky above garden, meadow, and wood lot in the glorious abandon of their vocal spring flight, while the charcoal-burner, to whom we pay toll for guarding the wild birds of the great north wood land, came down this morning from the camp, his sooty load freshly quilted with snow, and told me that a pair of great horned owls have been nesting for a week, while the precocious phœbe, instead of leaving as I thought, stays discreetly about the cow barns.

Ah, well, let the weather be as it may, the coming of the equinoctial spell is never stayed, but casts the *Wanderlust* upon us all. The boys are already talking and thinking fishing, for "Uncle" Martin Cortright gave them real rods at Christmas and father is teaching them to twist a very simple sort of fly, which is mercifully serving to keep their ardour in check until the proper time arrives. Evan has been unable to settle to his evening work for a week past, but has alternately dashed out on the porch to smoke and come in again to sneeze! Another proof that the Sublime and the Ridiculous were born twins and separated in early youth is that Spring and Snuffles both begin with the same letter.

Though I may not dig as yet, I must wander about and gaze at the earth to be sure it is there, and count the trees in the near-by wood to be certain that none are missing, trying the while to put myself in their places and wonder how they felt in the long loneliness when they had not the companionship of leaf or bird; for from youth to old age a tree seems to me the perfect combination of human and inanimate nature.

Sukey Crandon's brief visit was a good, seasonable tonic, warranted to increase the beats of the coldest heart and dispel theoretical nerve vapours, which

father says is one of the new diseases of the so-called educated classes *not* attributable to a microbe !

Naturally I am much interested in what Sukey had to say of Ivory Steele, for she seems to be of a type distinct from anything I have conceived, — a peculiar force, the indirection of whose current is bound to cross mine and exert at least the influence of awakened curiosity, whether I will or no, while it is probable that I shall meet her face to face at Easter. However, as far as attraction goes, the claim belongs wholly to Sukey, and already the vital desires of her warm, unselfish heart are not only stirring me to action, but may possibly, for a time at least, partially settle the problem of occupation and fill the hands of no less a personage than the Lady of the Bluffs herself ! Who knows ? But as usual I am doing that of which Evan often accuses me, not only counting the chickens before the eggs are hatched, but before I have either secured the eggs, a sitting hen, or an incubator.

Even as I think this, my Familiar Spirit, never far away, but at this moment in the corner stirring about uneasily in the box of garden seeds which is half unpacked and all of a clutter, peers out and begins making derisive faces at me, thus recalling the many chickenless plans of my fancy.

I can best remember Sukey's standpoint by setting down her own words, as I remember them, in my Wonder Book; for it is very strange that much that she has told me of the attitude of Ivory Steele acts as a commentary upon the father-Truesdale-Nord-schau chain of correspondence, vitalizing it and giving it a comprehensible personality to me.

"You know, Cousin Barbara," Sukey had continued, after her pause of astonishment at discovering that I knew something of Ivory Steele, "that immediately after I graduated from Barnwell, I had a good chance to teach in a vacation school, whereby I could save a little money; then I came to the Bridgeton School, where I have been ever since, last summer being tided over by doing a bit of everything, including stenography and typewriting as 'vacation supply' in one of the Wells & Sharp Manufacturing Company offices.

"How did I learn stenography? I picked it up, little by little, from one of the older girls who had earned money for her course thereby, in my freshman year at college, and taking my lecture notes with it gave me practice; as to the typewriting, that came of itself, and staying at Barnwell, as I did, during most of the short vacations, I at least earned my shoes and a trifle that was really my own to give

away, by copying not only for some of the girls but for the professors as well. One of the hardest things, I think, for girls who are obliged to be educated on what, put it in the kindest way you please, must be called charity, is that they can have nothing that is really a part of themselves to give. If one's father can support one, it is wholly different, though there were so many girls at college whose one idea was to cut loose as quickly as possible and be independent when there was no need, and the only result of it seemed to be hurting people's feelings, scattering families, and being generally uncomfortable!"

(All of which goes to bear out my own pet idea that many women go to great trouble to be uncomfortable when the reverse would not only be easier but more humane to those with whom they must come in contact.)

"If one's father has plenty or even a little to give a daughter, why shouldn't he? That is, up to a certain point. It is the only just paternal equivalent and continuation of the mother's milk that gives one the first real hold of life. Of course girls should try not to be a drag, but it isn't fair to take all the responsibility from your parents, or they will get into bad habits, and in a jiffy the first thing you'll know, everything will be topsyturvy. As a matter of course, these

children will shirk when they are parents. Anyhow, a great deal of higher education, as I've seen it, is to shirk straight away responsibility and 'discipline your mind' by thinking up something to take its place. Soon babies will be expected to get up at night, measure their milk, and heat their own bottles, as a part of the 'new mind discipline' of infancy! As it is, Laura Hawks is expecting almost as much of her baby, six months old! She's bought a book, 'Colt on the Training of Infants,' which allows nothing to be done that is natural, until I should think the poor babies would hate their mothers as a matter of necessity!"

(I am really often startled by Sukey's directness, which in a woman not yet twenty-three seems at least unusual; but then, as she says in another connection, "When one is nearly the oldest of eight and has a middle-aged step-mother, one can learn a great deal without travelling far.")

"In this way I drifted along until the first of this year, not liking to let go of what I had, but not drawing any nearer toward the something by which we three girls can come together and have a home. Meanwhile Lois, after taking half the high-school course at Embury, was obliged to give it up, owing to father's move to Pine Ridge Chapel, and now she

is tutoring two little boys for her board and taking a course in the Bridgeton business college; while Jane — poor Jane! — is still cooking. She is pretty, too, — very pretty, — more like mother than any of us, and so comfortable to have about! For, in spite of having had her first youth sapped by making endless bread and cookies for us, — without grumbling, — though she's twenty-four, she simply longs for a good time and to see and have pretty things, and doesn't give up hope that she may 'some day.' And meanwhile she makes so much of little pleasures.

“ Before father's last move, to Pine Ridge, she had made her scrap of a room as pretty as possible, with 'Gibson girls' and all the other pleasant pictures she could collect from chance papers, and framed them in dark blue cartridge paper from a roll the last migrant had left in a closet. Of course, as they were pasted to the wall, she had to leave them all and begin over again! So far, she has never even had the time thoroughly to soak out her hands and let her nails grow into shape. After thinking it all over during the holidays, I wrote to Mrs. Lavantia Blair and asked her advice.

“ You see, Cousin Barbara, she expected that I should teach for a while, until I looked about a little and collected a few clothes, and then enter upon

some sort of 'career,' as she calls it; and whatever I do, I'm sure to disappoint her!

"The fact that I graduated fairly well did not imply that I have any talent, or even ability, for specialized work. How could I help getting through? It is pleasant to learn almost anything; especially when your course is laid out and you have interesting professors, books, time enough to study, and are always healthy ('disgustingly healthy' some of the floppy girls called me). That is, when I can get all the fresh air I want and do not tire my head too much; for brain fag is much more hurtful to a woman, I think, than mere bodily fatigue that is cured while you sleep.

"But outside of graduating and being, on general principles, fond of everything that is do-able, I had no particular gifts. On the strength of two or three good theses, I suppose I might have let myself aspire to a literary life *via* newspaper reporting, but that would push the idea of getting the girls together quite below the horizon. A business life was the most attractive, because in it there would be work for both hands and head, but the thing at first was to earn something as quickly as possible.

"To be sure, the simple fact of graduating gave me a better chance to teach, but here again comes a

difficulty. I love the contact with the children, but I haven't much patience with the methods of the primary and mixed school such as has fallen to my lot. I must teach a number of things that I know in my heart are perfectly useless, and there is no time left for what the children would really enjoy. Also it is hard to grow to love a particular child or group of children, and then have them move on. I know that a teacher should, as the theory runs, 'never allow the personality of a pupil to take the place of the general development of the whole class.' But if you take personality out of teaching, and regard the children as a progressive lot of *its*, I'm afraid interest does go, and after a while you begin to get what I call 'teachers' spine,' that makes one so rigid and inflexible and positive, with a face so like a mask that an expert can tell a square away what your vocation is!"

(Poor Sukey! how I sympathize with her! Personality certainly is the zest of life itself, both here and hereafter. Who would care for an impersonal immortality, a sort of jellyfish aggregation of unidentified longing?)

"Oh, there is such a lot of tommy-rot round loose! Imagine the folly of making the little lads sew on Friday afternoons with the girls! It seems as if some sort of a microbe had incubated itself to

turn the world topsyturvy, fight nature, and enfeeble sex itself! What is the sense of deliberately turning out ladylike boys and manly girls? I truly think that the struggle we see in college and after begins in the primary schools.

“The vacation school where I taught between terms one summer was far more satisfactory. We, for there were two of us, had a tumble-down old house out toward Dexter meadows with quite a bit of garden. Here the girls tended the flower beds and the boys the vegetables, and when it rained we had all sorts of lessons indoors,—real nature orgies,—and then the boys learned to make plant labels, flower stakes, and bird-houses to sell, as well as to mend the tools, while the girls made cookies and also currant and raspberry jelly from the fruit of the old bushes in the garden, so that between them all they made enough to pay for the seed and stuff we used, which was quite a feather in our caps, as the whole affair was an experiment and arranged by private subscription. It gave me a glimpse of what I should really like to do, of what fitted me, so to speak; but last year some one had bought the place we had occupied, and before another could be found it was too late and I was driven to office work, for I could not afford to be idle.

“Office work! Many women seem to find it a congenial atmosphere and think it a higher grade of employment, because they go out to it, than many things they could do under home roofs, and that they are proving themselves the equal of men. I did not; I was simply offered less pay than my younger brother, who has had no college training, receives for the same class and hours of work. I dare say that I was worth no more, — the average woman has not the physical staying qualities of the man, and I have no personal conceit, — but I could not be elated as a result of my experience, or see what Mrs. Lavantia Blair calls the ‘glory and rights’ of my privileges as a new woman.

“Of course we all have the legal right to push out and limit the field of man’s work by overcrowding it, but we are only ultimately hurting ourselves, because it lessens man’s ability to marry us, at least men in our own walk of life, which isn’t quite wholesome!

“Not that I count on marriage for *myself* in my plans. I suppose that mother’s hard life must have sunk into me in spite of her wish to the contrary; at any rate it seems much easier to see what love is not than what it is. But all the same I know I’m an out-and-out domestic woman (how Ivory

Steele used to quiver herself into a rage over that term, and said it was being the human equivalent of a rabbit). I do not mean the *heavily domestic woman*, however, of the kind who always utilizes her numerous progeny as sort of banners to wave in the faces of her friends to take their attention from her own deficiencies, sighing and murmuring, 'No, I hadn't heard that there is a prospect of war between Russia and Siberia! Oh, Japan did you say? But you see I seldom have a chance to read the papers, I'm *so* devoted to my children!'

"I have two schemes for us girls, if I can only get the encouragement to put either one in practice. I should like to hire a small place hereabouts, or at least near one of the trolley lines to Bridgeton, yet which should be in the real country, and have a summer school for a dozen little children whose parents could afford to pay. There are a great many well-to-do people right in Bridgeton, who have nice homes that they do not care to leave in summer and yet would like their children to have a happy outing. And even when people do go away, the grown girls and boys are sure to wish to go where the sort of fun the big frogs enjoy is bane to the dear little tadpoles. If there are some children to be had in Bridgeton, I thought

that there would be sure to be others who come to The Bluffs who might like to join; and that if I could gain a start, the Bluff people and all those who drive across to and fro on the post road from the Country Club colony might be attracted, and like their children to go to a day 'Garden School.'

"My plan would be, in the beginning, if I could find children enough, to have a strong, middle-aged woman to help Jane with the heavy housework, while Lois and I would do the care-taking and the teaching. Then in the autumn we could manage for ourselves, Lois and I taking home office work from Bridgeton, while I could coach pupils for their high-school or even college examinations, and meanwhile develop and print photographs for amateurs! There are plenty of photographers, but no one who does it *lovingly* in Bridgeton. I mean no one who bothers to save the good bit of a light-struck picture, and by choosing the right mount give the kodaker a surprise instead of a disappointment.

"Do you know, Cousin Barbara, I hear that Grandpa Bacon's little place (it passed out of the family after mother died) is to be repaired and rented this season, and if I could only have that for the school and gather Jane and Lois under one roof in

the house where mother was born, I should have my heart's desire!

"I put everything in detail and in plain figures, and sent the scheme to Mrs. Lavantia Blair, because she told me when I left college that if a reasonable business venture occurred to me, of which she approved, requiring a small capital, she might be able to loan it to me.

"The other scheme, which involves less expense and responsibility, is not half so attractive. It is to take part of a little house, or a few rooms, in the centre of Bridgeton, — a kitchen, a living room, a couple of bedrooms, and a good-sized office, — something that Jane could manage, while Lois and I carry out the same scheme of taking home office work, tutoring, and picture developing.

"How did I learn photography? I know very little about the taking, for I've never owned a camera; but at college we had a short course of photo-chemistry with practical training, and I always developed Ivory Steele's work, — she had a splendid outfit, — it used to stain her fingers so; and from that I fell to making the girls' college experience pictures into what they called 'surprise albums,' because I had a sort of knack of seeing what part of the print made a good picture.

“After I had worked out both schemes very carefully, putting down the possible drawbacks as well as the disadvantages, so that I might not overpersuade Mrs. Blair by my own eagerness, I mailed my letter, with a kiss for luck on each of the three post-stamps it needed, — and waited. This is the answer I received in about a week’s time : —

“‘ BOSTON, *January 8, 19—.*

“‘ DEAR SUSANNA,

“‘ To say that your last letter provoked me was my first impulse, — the first thought that arrived in my mind, — but that would neither express my feelings nor adequately analyze my motives. No, I must be more serious and say that I am deeply disappointed at the narrow way in which you regard the glorious possibilities that life stretches before a woman of this day and generation who has had the training not only of one of the best colleges, but of one where she by daily co-educational contact must feel herself undeniably the equal and competitor of man on his own ground.

“‘ I chose you for these educational advantages from among the numerous offspring of my unfortunate cousin, Jane Crandon, because I thought I saw in you unusual promise of the directness and decision

that would enable you to hold your own and aid the rapidly coming supremacy of the sex. What is the result? Instead of stepping boldly out and daring and doing, all your schemes are for shrinking in and tying yourself up to family life without the usual, but empty, excuse of matrimonial bondage!

“Why can you not realize and accept the most vital fact of the day — that what has been known as home life is both degrading and narrowing to the combination of people who live it? Given a fixed and permanent place of residence, some one unfortunate must be personally responsible for its régime. Man long since decided that woman was to assume this task, and she, weakly, before the awakening of her sex, yielded until the arrangement became a habit, which unfortunately still obtains to a painful degree in many of the smaller cities and other places where the balance of power is held by those of provincial and unprogressive mentality.

“The attitude in our great cities — our *Marts of Life* — shows a different picture. The old-time small home is vanishing in the advancing shadow of the flat and the great apartment hotel, which can be left at will, and where the desire of a family to remain under the same roof is reduced to a minimum, as well as the degrading employment — of coming in daily

contact with one's own pots and kettles and those who wield them — called housekeeping!

“‘The desirability of gathering a family in private around a common home table is taking its departure like other worn-out customs. It implies tyranny, — this forcing of separate individuals to feed in each other's company at special times and regular intervals. The restaurant or hotel table presents a far broader field for the gaining of experience and the learning of varied habits by children, so that they in their turn at maturity will properly spurn the narrowness of home restraint! Girls happily are rapidly being drawn to feel that they should no longer be tied to the home myth any more than their brothers, for whom a certain amount of knocking about has always been esteemed a preparation for life, in spite of the protests of those who, not being able to pull themselves out of the mire of prejudice, still bring antiquated facts to prove that woman is unnerved by struggle and not strengthened by it!

“‘All the trend of the higher scholastic education of woman to-day also tends to the dispelling of this myth. From sixteen years old and onward to twenty-two or more, the time when the female is most likely to become attached, through the dangers of budding sentimentality, to the place and people where she is

born, instead of being allowed to remain with them until these ties become knit in a way likely to influence her future and hold a deterrent influence on her outward career, the demands of absence at the preparatory school and during the subsequent college course serve in a high degree to counteract the influence of the home myth and loosen, if not wholly destroy, its cramping grip.

“‘But that you, Susanna Crandon, whose home has never been a fixture and whose excuse, in the shape of a weakly yielding mother, has been dead these nine years, — that you should develop this strange perverseness in insisting upon throwing away your opportunities not only amazes but unsettles me! Don’t you know that *woman* and what she does is the topic of the day, the one that fills every mind, — the woman errant, not the woman domestic? She goes everywhere, does everything that has ever been done before and many other things undreamed of, dares everything, aspires to everything! The question to-day is not what shall our boys, but our girls, do. It is not woman’s position that is dubious, but man’s; not how shall he support a woman, but himself!

“‘You say that you have no special talents for any art or science, or ability in a professional line. This is not of the slightest importance — courage

and the taking of a stand and holding it is what counts! Look about you at the number of women of absolutely no skill whatever who are holding responsible positions and who live in the public eye. Personal experience, even, is not necessary,—the trained mind of the woman of to-day grasps all by inference. Look at our public educators, lecturers, and reformers! Any intelligent woman can go into a factory and by looking about awhile express the feelings of the workers much more clearly than if prejudiced by being actually one of them, for is not her standpoint based on logic, theirs on mere feeling?

“Why, as a proof-case in point, I can tell you that my lecture on “The Solution of the Servant Problem” is one of the most popular and lucrative on the list of the *Woman's Club Lyceum Bureau*, and that I have a large scrap-book full of the commendations of the press; yet I have not kept house since the first year of my marriage, thirty years ago, or in any way come in contact with this tiresome class of workers.

“All that a clever woman needs to-day to insure at least a measure of public success is the knack of giving what is wanted, propounding theories just a little in advance of the procession, to necessitate the

excitement of a general quickening of pace, and also the tact to learn or infer only what she needs to further her plans! It is a great mistake for women who are to be fluently before the public to know too much. I've always noticed the most profound students of both sexes often seem to be struck dumb by their learning, which of course is not a lucrative proceeding.

“Neither of your propositions is to my mind. What you three girls need to do is to *scatter* and be rubbed up, not collect and wear on each other through sympathy, which is often a perverted name for lack of energy. So, though I do not like your tendencies, I am still interested in you sufficiently to make a counter-proposition on the lines of the scattering process.

“My lecturing tours have now assumed such wide proportions, — my volume on “The Perils of the Home Myth,” which I am sending by book post, also being widely read and commended, — that, though, having private means, I am really entering the field purely in the interests of humanity, I am now obliged to organize my plans upon a business basis for my own protection. This will make it necessary for me to keep a private secretary with me constantly, one who will also be capable

of taking notes, revising and typewriting my lectures, receiving people who call when I am out or otherwise engaged, answering their numerous questions and demands with tactful evasion, and also one who shall have sufficient feminine charm of manner to act as my press agent. This is in itself quite a responsible task, requiring a comprehensive knowledge of the policy of all the leading journals and their various attitudes toward the reforms of the day, especially the woman question!

“This position I now offer you for the period of one year, by way of experiment, which, if successful, will undoubtedly lead to your assuming a more ambitious career, as for instance reading my lectures in the smaller places where pressure of time will not allow me to go, and finally, when you are older and have gained poise, doing original work on these lines.

“Your salary shall be mutually discussed at a meeting which must take place here, if you are inclined to accept my offer, the year to begin on the expiration of the school term for which you are engaged.

“One thing more—this scheme for collecting, protecting, or whatever you may call it, your sisters. I can place Lois easily—a word from me will suffice—in a clerical position as corresponding secre-

tary here in the central office of the Anti-Home-Cooking Club, which is sending out its branches far and wide through suburban towns in its brave effort to awaken women to a sense of the miserable thralldom of domesticity. As for Jane, any one belonging so hopelessly to the old régime is not worth bothering about. When she finds all hope of your assuming the responsibility of her living removed, she will doubtless make haste to cook herself into some younger man's kitchen than her father's, and with a stolid obstinacy, of which there seems to be a strong streak in your family, thus roll from the frying-pan into the fire, perhaps not even realizing that she is burned.

“Understand, this is my final word to you, if you reject my offer.

“Your friend and adviser in the way of higher life,

“LAVANTIA BLAIR.”

When Sukey paused, I thought I saw something suspiciously like tears hanging from her long lashes; but almost immediately she began to laugh, though her voice was in a hysterical key rather than having its usual ring of merriment.

“Preposterous! but I'm not sure that I understand the letter,” I said, after thinking a moment. “Is it

serious or satirical? a mixture of both or altogether nonsense?" I asked. "What sort of a person is Mrs. Blair? A widow, I suppose; but is she quite sane?"

Sukey, by this time, in turning to put the letter in her pocket, had brushed away the tears; and, again sitting beside me on the old lounge, with head bent and hands clasped about her knee, spoke more slowly than she had before, a red spot on each cheek showing how hard she was struggling to keep herself within bounds as she answered my last question first.

"She is a very handsome woman of about fifty, who dresses in excellent taste and is good to look at. No, she is not a widow, neither is she divorced. Her husband, who is older by nearly twenty years, — a dear, lovable old man, not forceful, but fond of books and following his studies, — was once a professor of zoölogy at Barnwell when Cousin Lavantia was a student there. Now he lives on the old New Hampshire homestead that they turned into a lovely country home when they were first married, studies butterflies and bugs, and tries experiments with a fish-hatchery he has made. I saw the place two years ago, when Cousin Lavantia asked me there. No, they are not legally separated or on exactly bad terms; simply their ideas are different, — she goes

her own way, seeing him once a year or so, and he prefers to remain behind with Karl for company. Karl? Oh, I forgot to tell you; he is their son, their only child. Until he was two years old, mother used to say, he was as beautiful as a statue. Then he took cold or something, and his limbs became paralyzed, so that he has been a cripple ever since. At first his mother could not believe the truth, and took him to every physician of repute here and in Europe, but it was useless. Then she grew hard and strange, and fought God, and has been angry with Him ever since; for it was the first time in her life she had been thwarted, and she could not bear to look at Karl; so he, poor fellow, turned to his father, and the two are never apart but live in the great place with a man and woman to keep house for them. This is the story as mother told me, and I've seen for myself that it is true; such a dreadful look as came into the man's eyes as he heard his mother's voice, for he is nearly thirty years old now, but small, like a child. And now you see his father has grown more and more gentle and tender and unlike a man, as if trying to supply the mother's place, and everything is unnatural and terrible.

“Oh, how could she think I would go to live with her? Yes, her letter is meant to be perfectly seri-

ous. She is not insane, at least no one calls her so. I saw a notice about her in one of the educational journals only the other day, which began, 'Mrs. Blair, one of the advance-guard of the women errant, who are bound to become such a power in our land,' etc. And, Cousin Barbara, she is not in the ordinary sense a bad woman, not one who would break up homes in the common way. But somehow what she has written to me seems even worse. It is as if some hateful spirit has gotten into her and drives her on. Oh, it is dreadful!"—and Sukey hid her face on the sofa back.

"Then you are not going to accept her offer?" I said, in a tone which must have been one of relief, for instantly she looked up and said almost reproachfully: "Did you believe I could think of it even for a single minute? But you see that I must begin and plan all over again, and meanwhile Grandpa Bacon's little place may be sold!"

What could I do but put my arms around her and hug her tight, in a way that told her to have her cry out then and there, and let her get the comfort she could from *felt*, not spoken, sympathy. And as she nestled close, her head against my shoulder, with an older burden than I had ever felt, on her heart, yet as if I were her mother, my thoughts travelled back-

ward. At her age I was joyous in healthy youth, no thought of to-morrow except as a bringer of happiness. Father by my side, mother everywhere, though unseen, and Evan's love flushing, with a new, unimagined dawn, the horizon of my life. While here was poor little Sukey, so plucky, so affectionate, with no arms nearer than mine to comfort her natural breakdown.

Yes, it might be meddling, or it might be assuming a great responsibility; but there are times when certain temperaments must act on impulse. So I said, pushing the little, damp waves of hair back from her forehead and making her look up: "As long as you are very sure that you do not wish to step out, I have thought of something that may help you to stay inside. But don't hope for too much, but only enough to pluck up fresh courage with!"

The result is that I have written to Mrs. Jenks-Smith, and I am at present awaiting results as impatiently as a child for its Christmas stocking. Oh, how interesting life is!

IX

THE AWAKENING OF MRS. JENKS-SMITH

“Wednesday morning.

“MY DEAR MRS. EVAN:—

“My, but you are prompt! Your letter came in the morning mail, before I'd had my coffee, and at the first reading I couldn't seem to grip it. You'll find, when you pass forty, how that is. When you're young, maybe it's possible to go to bed sleepy and wake up awake, though I never remember doing it since I came East; but afterward you're pretty sure to go to bed wakeful and get up sleepy, and that's why nothing will ever do away with coffee in this wide world, when half the time it's the only thing worth opening your eyes for.

“After I'd breakfasted and 'Toinette had partly made my house toilette, all but the hair,—yes, I took her back in spite of the way she left me to go abroad with Vivvy Latham on the trip that turned out to be a double divorcée (is that the way to spell it?) honeymoon! I simply had to have a familiar face near me, and all the old employees left

and started something for themselves just as soon as the legacies Jenks-Smith left them were paid. That is, all but Collins, the furnace and sidewalk man, and his wife Ellen, who used to scrub down the front steps and do all the rough odd house jobs that, falling on the chalk-line that divided the other maids' work, no one of them would touch. The Collinses won't be pensioned off clear. I've suggested that they go and open a saloon somewhere, — he's English and she's Irish, and that's what retired help over there always do in story books, — 'publics' they call 'em, and I've offered to send them back home, but not a budge will they go.

"All the same, I can't work the Collinses in with the new help, because they are sure to be too bossy and stick to the way things have been. They are just dying to be sent up to the Bluffs to live on 'the estate,' as they call it, but things are running pretty smooth up there and I can't risk a shake-up. I'm half minded to shut up and go off again, only as I've no notion of growing old and dying in a foreign land, — my dear, you know there are some places where they bury you the very same day, and how could I be sure I was dead? — I've got to come back sometime, and I might as well stop here right now.

"Where was I? I'd so much rather talk to

you over the 'phone, — I always drop the trail when I write letters, — only I no sooner get comfortably settled down and chat a few minutes than the first thing I know I'm cut off!

“Oh, yes, 'Toinette was dressing me! Well, she was arranging my hair, when I thought she was fumbling a good deal and I asked her what was the matter. Whereupon she, who only came to me a couple of months ago, when I was in Paris, without a sou in her pocket (she said Vivvy Bell hadn't paid her, but I never believed that), crying, and saying I was the only real *grande dame* she had ever served (and I not only took her but brought her back first-class), up and told me that she is to marry Mr. Vanderveer's French valet, and they are to keep the town house in summer while the family is away, which they are most of the time, counting in the South. Also she is to have charge of keeping in order Mrs. Vanderveer's laces, which, as I must know, is an 'honour no woman would refuse.'

“For a moment I was struck dumb, and then I saw in a flash how I'd been imposed upon. Vanderveer only engaged that valet on his last trip, for we met in Paris; and 'Toinette leaving Vivvy and freezing to me was to work me for the passage, a couple of months' wages, and a lot of my coloured clothes to

start herself with, all of which she's succeeded in doing! When I realized, I did get in a boiling rage! Without so much as looking at her face in the glass, I pointed to the door and told her to go, and not dare show her face again until after lunch, when I was going out.

"She didn't say a word, and went; but the next minute, when I saw myself in the glass, I wished that I had looked before I spoke; for she had left my hair half up and half down, or, to speak plain, part on and part off, and I was in a fix. Still, I was too furious to ring for her, so I just slapped on a bow with a dull jet buckle that belonged to one of my colonial slippers, and thought I'd take it easy for the morning and read your letter over again good and slow, when up came Parker (yes, he's left Vivvy, too) and said that Miss Penfield was downstairs. She didn't expect I'd be down so early, and might she not come up?

"Now Dora Penfield is all right in her place, but what she calls her vocation (which Jenks-Smith always called the 'upside down' of being crossed in love through her own contrariness) in lady-managing that baby hospital doesn't keep her half busy. You see the way she is placed is just this: being a lady born, though country, and having money

in plenty to keep herself, outside of her salary, she's independent as you please; and as the managers can't bully her, they are very intimate with her and ask her to their houses. Having trained for a nurse, she knows lots of little wrinkles about children's ailments and tired feelings and one thing and another that they like her advice about, because she'll tell lots more than a doctor thinks right to let out. That takes her upstairs most everywhere she goes, so in one way and another, in spite of having the name of living for good works, she leads about the newsiest life in town, outside of the papers. This morning I had reason for not being seen, yet she isn't one to put off for nothing, so I said, 'Parker, tell Miss Penfield that I'm feeling very indisposed and not able to go out to-day.' I really was worked up, my dear, so don't stare holes in the paper with that wide-open look I've seen you wear when people fib.

"Back comes Parker, and he says: 'Miss Penfield is most grieved, ma'am; she says as she is going across the way to Mrs. Vanderveer's to spend the morning and read to Master De Peyster, ma'am, to rest his precious eyes, ma'am, he having the influenza. And she says, ma'am, if you should be wanting her any time to-day, or if you think she could ease you,

she will be sitting close by Mrs. Vanderveer's window, and if you will have the maid but lift the curtain at your boudoir-window, she'll slip over,— and please, ma'am, is it your 'ead?'

“‘Yes, tell her it's my *head!*’ I said, and then I sat down and laughed till I cried to think how I'd got myself trapped. Still, it is not so bad to stay in, for it is an awful dull, cold sort of morning; and all I intend doing this afternoon is to drive around the park, for I've nothing to go to the shops for except some presents for half-a-dozen after-Easter weddings, and there is no pleasure in buying things for people when ten to one they don't want what you choose. I'd just like to meet some one, anywhere from the kitchen up, who would be surprised and pleased with anything I could do for them. I don't mean grateful in words, for I do hate that sort of thing. Ugh! the heavy feeling it gives one to hear formal thanks, as if the people were lifting a weight off themselves and dumping it on me.

“But to be able to please somebody right up and down so that it sticks out all over them, and they can't hide it any more than Peysey Vanderveer's cocker spaniel can hide the glad feeling when they lift his leash for a run! Well, I guess that is too much to expect!

“Here I have sat down to answer your letter before I’ve really read it, that is with my mind on top; and I’m going on about everything else under the sun, just as if we were talking, — I who would not have believed a year ago that I would be so hard up for something to do!

“You see, one reason why I didn’t wish to see Dora Penfield just now is that she is bothering me with all sorts of absurd plans for what she calls ‘amusing me through good works.’ Well, I’ll not deny that the works do seem to be good; but, as near as I can make out, I only come into them as far as the length of my check-book is concerned, and she even seems disposed to stick herself into that as a blotting-pad. So I’d rather make up my mind good and firm about what I’m going to do this summer and where I’m going, before she tries me on a new side. Botheration! the violet ink has all turned to jelly. I don’t use it enough to keep it stirred, I suppose, and I’ll have to use the black. I shouldn’t have that except the executor brought me a bottle the other day to sign papers with; he said it looked more regular, but I do love violet, it flows so much better and helps along with the spelling; you have to go slower with the black, and it will insist upon showing up every letter. I suppose,

though, black is better business, as he says; and, anyhow, it is more chic with black-edged paper than the violet. I couldn't think why my writing has looked so piebald lately, but I guess I've used the same pen for both inks, and I'd best look up a new one."

* * * * *

"3.30 P.M.

"What do you suppose I did this morning after I'd turned my desk out to find that pen, and couldn't, and had to go through poor Jenks-Smith's desk in his den? You'd never guess! I sat down in front of the fire and did nothing but think hard for nearly an hour! And I might just as well tell you how it all came about, too. Well, as I said, I was rummaging in the den desk and I rumbled up a paper that was in the bottom of one of the drawers, and there was a photograph and a bit of something like the rag of a horse blanket! I saw it was a girl's picture, and I picked it up and brought it back here to get my glasses and take a good look,—oh, yes, I have to wear goggles for reading now; flourishing lorgnons is only for outside, when you'd rather not see, in fact.

"For a minute I couldn't make the picture out,—it was a goodish-sized girl on an Indian pony. Then I got such a shock that I nearly dropped the picture

in the fire, myself included, for who was it but me! Me and my pony Jim! Toward the back of the picture was a bushy dog tail that belonged to Duke, my collie, only the rest of him had moved off! How my hand shook! That picture was taken by a man in the prospecting party that came to stake out the railroad route through Dad's claim about the time he made the deal and I first saw Jenks-Smith! But the rag of cloth that was with the photo knocked me higher yet! It was a bit of a riding-skirt that I made myself from a horse blanket that Dad bought me from a trader. It wasn't easy to get a good piece of cloth out our way, and this blanket was a light, nice weave and a good tan colour, with dark blue lines crisscrossing into a sort of plaid. What a job I had to get that skirt out of the thing, and didn't I have to turn and twist and contrive,—the very thought of it makes my blood jump! I hadn't worn it a dozen times, worse luck, when between spur and stirrup it got a frayed tear clear out of the hem, and here, after thirty-two years, I find the rag of hem in Jenks-Smith's desk with that picture. I knew he was proud of my looks in his way, but I never thought before he cared like that; and though it's all over and gone, somehow it makes everything seem more worth while.



“‘For a minute I couldn’t make the picture out.’”



“Gracious! considering how many different lives and changes we live through in this world, it doesn’t seem strange to me any more, the idea of keeping right on living when some people insist that we are dead.

* * * * *

“Well, just about then Parker came up and said lunch was served, and would I let ’Toinette come in?

“‘No,’ said I; ‘bring something up on a tray and don’t let a living soul come near me until five o’clock.’ I’d got away so far back that I didn’t want to be dragged back and have to go down and face all that plate on the sideboard and know that I’m in ‘Park Lane.’ I guess Parker was startled; I heard him say to ’Toinette, who I knew was snivelling outside the door, ‘I’ll wager you’ve done for yerself *this* time!’

“So I had my luncheon all by myself, and Parker made up the fire, and slid out without a word, though it’s second or third man’s work, so I judged he felt rather anxious. Maybe the fire had something to do with the strange way I felt, sort of quiet and contented, for the gas logs used to have such bad smelling fits I had them taken out a week ago, and the fire was all real wood with a good piny smell, and it kept whistling away, as if it had its hands in its pockets and was comfortable, too.

“When I’d finished my lunch, I read your letter over again, slowly, and saying the words out loud, and it wasn’t at all the same as the one I’d read in the morning. Why, Mrs. Evan, I haven’t felt as excited over anything for years! Not since I found I could get the skirt out of that blanket by using the neck stretch for the under-knee gore!

“Those three Crandon girls walked out from the letter just as plain as if they were living pictures in the vaudeville, and I felt as if I must grab them by their skirts to keep them from getting away, as dreams always do. Yes, I’ll give that trump Sukey a start for all she’s worth; and I’ll fix them all out, though not just in the way you put it. Now read slow and don’t skip while I explain, for Jenks-Smith did say that at times by luck I had as good business judgment as any man he knew, though I never have got used to signing my name to a check, front and back, when I want to draw the money myself, and that unfortunate man in the cage always has to say ‘In-dorse, please, madam,’ so often that I should think he’d turn into a parrot.

“Oh, I wish I could keep that telephone to myself for half an hour, so I could tell by your tone of voice what you think, for you know you’re not the one to keep back and make believe. But though my ’phone

is in my dressing room, I know every word I say goes into every other house in 'Park Lane' through the kitchen and up the back stairs. Talk about the country being a gossipy place, half our maids get their wages graded as much by the news they bring as the way they dress hair and fill up wrinkles.

"I want at least part of this scheme of mine to lie still until I'm good and ready, and then take them all by surprise just when they've given up expecting anything of me.

"Sukey's idea of having a sort of summer play school—'Garden School' I believe you called it—to keep youngsters amused and out of mischief is immense, and I think I can make it a success. The Bluffs children get to hanging round the stables too much, because it's the only place where there's something going on when it's too hot to be outdoors, and I know it's worse yet over at the Pine Woods Park on account of the Country Club. Why, last summer the Lortons' little Mignonne, only four years old, strayed away from her nurse (for you know 'Where caddies are, there do the nurses gather'), and the next thing they knew she was found under the piazza perfectly paralyzed from sucking the straws that came out of a lot of mint-juleps!

"Only last week Julie Vanderveer and half a dozen

friends more dropped in for afternoon tea, and they were talking the matter over. They said the country was all very well and doubtless an innocent sort of place for children by itself, but when you got enough people and sport in it to make the silence endurable, it goes a little faster than the city because everything is open, free and easy, and in sight; that in the city people in society have no trouble in keeping their babies out of bars and stables (though, between ourselves, the talk that goes on about the family between the men and maids in the children's dining room and above stairs is worse than a compôte of twenty bars and stables stewed together).

“Julie Vanderveer, who by the way has learned a lot of sense since the twins, little Flo and Virgie, arrived and Peysey, instead of being an only child, is reduced to the ranks and one of three, suggested that one of the Bluffs families hire a governess and start a morning summer school, and have her teach all about flowers, bugs, how not to get poisoned with ivy, and all that sort of thing that is the rage now. Each family should pay a hundred dollars a child for four months, the money to go to the one who holds the class, and what was left after paying expenses could be given to whatever charity the manager chooses. Though I counted five hundred dollars' worth of

children right in that one group, no one seemed anxious to have the class at her home.

“The trouble was, nobody wanted to shoulder the governess, — a tutor now would be so different! But governesses often turn out such mixed pickles: if they are young and ladies (and they ought to be young to frisk with the children), they’re a load on your chest after school hours; if you’ve nice feelings, you have them in to late dinner, and then there are the older sons and handsome brothers, and their poor heads (I mean the governesses’) get giddy first and then swelled up later on, so that the men within their reach that they knew before seem like lead dimes, — not worth picking up even for car fare! If they’re not ladies, it’s bad for the children, and then there will be trouble between the butler, if he’s English with manners, and the head groom and valet! While everybody thought it would be a fine thing, nobody seemed to want the camp in their reservation; so you see this is where I can strike in and do every one a favour to boot, which seldom happens when helping a third party and pleasing yourself.

“So much for the scheme! Now for the details! Sukey Crandon must give up the idea of the Bridgeton people at the start, and let them go a few years longer, until the novelty wears off for the Bluffs

people. The mixture would never do at first. I suppose she has the idea of doing good and all that, and the rich and poor meeting! Well, that is right and proper; but tell her to wait anyway until she gets established, and then she can have her way,—lead 'em up to it, you know.

“It’s a mighty good thing she’s a college woman—college is the swell thing just now, and I tell you what, the girls are dressing up and not down to it as they used a while ago. They’ve caught on to the fact that brains, real or doublets, are helped along by a good setting!

“I’ll let her have the Bacon place, house and garden, for two hundred dollars a year (I’d just as lief give it rent free, only, as you say, business is business, and she is a worker all over—not an object of charity). I could rent it for five hundred dollars for the summer, but I’d have to spend the difference in fancy repairs. My agent tells me there is some good plain furniture in it, enough for a start, I guess, and there is a good garden that can be made into separate plots as you suggest.

“Now right here comes my first change from your plan. It will never do to have poor sister Jane do part of the work with a hired woman,—it mixes things and takes the college air off,—and summer’s

too hot to teach the children cooking, — a little sewing might do! You understand, and you can explain it to Miss Crandon so that she will. She will be head and Lois assistant, and — now don't object — Collins and his wife shall go there to live and manage the work in and out doors! Ellen is a good cook, which is necessary, for the children must lunch there (that 'll be extra over the hundred), and Collins shall be handy man and see to the garden; he'll wear a sort of undress livery arrangement, and set off the whole thing with the 'old respectable servant' dodge.

"This will settle my problem of the Collinses' wanting to live on 'the estate,' and they'll earn their pension and get their board from Miss Crandon, — besides, as you say they are both pretty girls, it's best to have elders in the house, no matter how well they know how to behave. I've been about a lot and I know there's no better way to stop talk than before it begins; and in winter, when the children are gone, the Collinses will be a godsend to the girls, for Ellen is as comfortable as only the right kind of an Irish woman knows how!

* * * * *

"A fire-engine just flew up the avenue, and I forgot about Dora Penfield opposite and nearly pulled

back the curtain to look out the window. Bless me! but she's there yet, dressing a doll, with one eye glued to this house; there's going to be a fair after Easter for the Babyland Hospital, so I must order something to make her forget to-day!

“Now, Mrs. Evan, do you be sure and see Miss Crandon as soon as possible, and I'll telephone you before Sunday just how many children I can raise, and remember it's *pay in advance* on entering! She'd doubtless trust us, but I know society, poor lamb, and at the end of every season—it doesn't matter which, spring, summer, autumn, or winter—everybody is hard up, especially 'Whirlpool' society, and society is queer and follows Bible etiquette in some things, as your father, the doctor, knows to his cost, I guess. It's usually a case of the last being first and the first last, when bills are paid,—though the worthy meek, instead of inheriting the earth, usually get left!

“I guess this is enough for one dose, but probably I'll think of a dozen things when this is posted. Oh! I've forgotten the most important of all, the place where *I* come in! I know by this time your heart has dropped down in your boots and you're wondering what becomes of poor Jane, if she can't be cook! Well, I'm going to have her for myself! No, not

for a maid to take 'Toinette's place, but just have her for company, to take her around and give her the good time she hasn't had! Just think of a youngish, good-looking girl that you could show something to that she hadn't seen before, and give something to that might make her squeal with delight, that is if she isn't crushed dumb, which would be a shock, but I don't believe she is, — nobody gets quite blown out at twenty-four, and for a good, fierce, steady blaze when it's once started, give me bottled-up youth!

"I do wish I could hear you think. I suppose you are saying that this breaks up Miss Crandon's idea of getting her sisters together under one roof. It does look so at the first, but she's getting back in her grandfather's house and rescuing one sister, and if Jane and I can't put up with each other (I mean to take her for a year on trial), why, at the end of it she will know her way about, meet our crowd, and be able to help in the school somewhere outside the kitchen, or I miss my guess. And then we'll soak out those poor hands of hers that she's never had a chance all her life to get in shape, — the thought of them just went to my heart! But we'll fix all that! The sight of that bit of my riding-skirt brought back just what red paws I had once; and yet afterward, though they were never small, Jenks-Smith said he

never saw better hands for setting off rings,—it takes sort of fat, quiet hands for that, not the fidgety kind that are always twisting about and fingering something.

“Now I guess by this you are thinking, ‘Well, suppose she takes poor Jane and at the year’s end drops her back into the kitchen—she’ll be worse off than before;’ and you’d be perfectly right in thinking it, for our set are just made up of fads that they shift about like their corset pads,—wouldn’t feel in it if they wore them two years in the same place,—but I’ll do right by Jane, if she comes to me, which, of course, isn’t certain, for you may have scruples about asking her, and there is that home-grabber of a sister to reckon with, besides the girl herself.

“Of course, by and by, Jenks-Smith’s money goes to the Honourable Muriel, Aileen, and Con McCarthy; but I’ve got my own settlement safe and pat, and, no matter how she turns out, poor Jane shan’t be any more unfortunate because of me; and whatever else I may have done, not a discharged servant even would ever say that Hattie Jenks-Smith ever trod on anybody that was down, especially a woman.

“But that reminds me, you don’t think being brought up the daughter of a wandering parson of a

'small parish (that kind always seem bent on getting even for their own poor luck and lack of comfort by insisting on preaching hell-fire sermons the hottest summer days, so as a matter of course the weekend men find golf a lot cooler and more comforting) will make Jane sit in judgment on me, even if she is a bit slow in her mind? for I shouldn't like that a bit. I've noticed it doesn't take much brain to do that, but quite the other way. Of course I should do some things very differently if I'd a young girl in the house. That's where Vivvy Latham made her first bad step, playing cards for money, with Carthy just getting out of college, — it's bad for a boy whose mother can't be trusted! No more card-playing for money if Jane comes; thank the Lord I never did paint, and only use a trifle of powder, and I hardly need that now I'm so pale.

“But, as Jenks-Smith used to say, ‘There is no good in taking trouble on a ninety-nine years' lease,’ and I'd better wait at least until I've seen poor Jane before I begin. No, I think somehow it's going to be all right, if only I can make her feel as glad to be alive as I was that day I got my habit done and went off on Jim. The thought of it makes me glad I'm alive, now, when I was

getting to think, having 'done all the do-able,' as that newspaper rhyme sets it, that I was about through.

"God help us (for there certainly *is* a God and a good one too, or I'd never have found that old photograph to-day), but life is interesting after all, and better than we get in the habit of thinking it.

"It's beginning to get darkish. Dora Penfield has just gone home, and I'll have to stop and have 'Toinette finish me and light up, and after dinner I'll run over and start Julie Vanderveer on the 'School Garden' scheme. Well, this has been a day!

"Your sincere friend,

"HATTIE JENKS-SMITH.

"P. S. One thing more! I want to do something for your father's hospital. Jenks-Smith always meant to. Tell Dr. Russell to fix up that room he was talking about for women who've seen better days and need building up in quiet. I'll send the check. Let him call it the Hattie and Timothy room —(yes, that was his first name, but he only used the T. of it). H."

* * * * *

(Two days later: Mrs. Jenks-Smith at the telephone.)

"What? You've seen Sukey and she agrees? Says I must see Jane before deciding? When?

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Am I going to the Bluffs any time in the next week or so? Yes, right after Easter, for two or three days. Tell her to come over to luncheon — no, you bring her, there's a dear. Her father or stepmother might tag on.

“Hello! Mrs. Evan! Wasn't it good I hadn't given 'Toinette all of my coloured summer gowns? I've a closet of mulls and organdies. I must start right in and fit Jane up just as soon as I've seen her. Wonder if she's got a waist, or if she's smallest up where her figure ought to be. Most country girls are built that way, but now that everybody takes the *Delineator* maybe they've changed!

“Hello! wait a minute! Oh, you're glad, too, are you? Was afraid you mightn't trust me. But you may, and I've sort of waked up — yes, — waked — up! Did my — own — hair — this — morning! I'm not going to depend on a maid any more. They're all right if they don't own you. Yes, — own — hair! What! did Dr. Russell say *that* about the hospital room? Oh, well, that's worth being alive for, even if Jane turns out dumb!”

X

KITES AND CHARACTERISTICS

April 7th. March went out with a final roar, and it has taken a full week of April's wiles, in shaking of red maple tassels before our eyes, and strewing the sheaths of bursting buds at our very feet, to convince us that she is really here. But here she is, with a smile curving her tantalizing lips at the very moment that she is shaking a tear from her long lashes, the most beloved and feminine of months, the time of promise, of courting and mating, and the season of warm-hearted renewal, of the magic and mythology of nature, when the south breeze, bearing in its bosom a sunbeam, kisses the sleeping heart of the woodland and the wind-flower springs from the caress.

Moreover, when all the world is in its first flight, we know that it is April. Flight of potent gold-dust pollen, flight of white moth, flight of bird everywhere piercing the sky, flight of song slipping through the unmuffled branches that vibrate an accompaniment, and flight of joyous spirit that would fathom the sky

depths, and, failing, yet in its return brings God to the heart!

Even the games of boyhood take flight above the ground when April comes, and the marbles and tops that clung to the earth make way for the soaring kite. I always loved to make kites and fly them whenever I had the shadow of an excuse; and this spring I've been renewing the old vocation in the fashioning of the stout old-fashioned kite that has outlasted all others, whether the fantastic Japanese bird or the scientific but unlovable box variety, — the kite that is begun by forming a light but strong cruciform frame of the rattan used for garden stakes, finished above the arms by a half circle of split reed soaked in hot water until it bends easily, while a stout twine stretched from the arms down to the foot where it is securely fastened, pulls the structure into shape and makes it firm. The covering may be of glazed cotton or paper, and the decorations *con amore*; but, as in many other articles, the skill of the whole making often lies in the tail, which must, like a true spinal column, have vertebræ at regular intervals and be of duly proportionate weight to the kite, both to follow and hold in check, a truly delicate proposition to be worked out in paper, rags, and twine. My sun and moon kites were always the most effective when well

launched, for under these conditions smaller and more elaborate decorations disappear ; and these time-honoured patterns find favour with Richard, but Ian has a bolder fancy. Working under his suggestion, I have painted on his, two weird goblin heads that he dubbed " Thunder " and " Lightning."

Already are my thumbs flattened by turning and creasing down the covering edges, and my finger joints twisted from stretching the cord around the frames and knotting the tails, so that, plus gardening, I do not know how my hands will survive the season ; for Ian's uncalculating impetuosity and strenuous methods make keeping him supplied with kites no light task, even though there is an unwritten law that he must do his own mending as far as he can, and rescue treed tails whenever possible without too great a risk to life and limb.

In fact, kite-flying has its side of discipline, as well as of pleasure, for all of us ; for it takes far longer to untangle several hundred yards of kinked and knotted string dropped in a heap by a wind fluke, than it does to play it out under the excitement of a sudden rise, and it is as vain to expect Richard's careful methods of Ian, as it would be to demand of him his brother's unflinching fearlessness.

A few days ago, after losing his biggest kite and

half the cord, Richard rigged a small castaway fishing reel of father's upon a short stick which he grasped between his hands, playing his line in and out in this species of sky angling in a way that delights his grandfather's heart. While Ian, though he always starts out with a nicely wound bob, is sure to drop it in his first ecstasy, and, all oblivious, twists the sharp cord about his fingers until they are swollen and sometimes bleeding; yet by some mystery his kites, though oftenest wrecked, outfly his brother's.

Lately I have found a new master-key to my Ian's innermost self that hitherto, in times of anger, would only open its door to love of me, reason being powerless. This magic thing is music! My love of music is responsive but not creative, while Evan has both qualities in a degree so intense that, though I cannot wholly fathom it, yet fills me with awe.

A few weeks ago, when Ian had worked himself into a hopeless sort of frenzy over a mere trifle that anger had magnified to the bulk of an injustice, I left him alone to go to bed, because it is not just to him that I should take advantage of his misery and force myself to hear words that he cannot unsay, or to me to let those words, once heard, pass unnoticed; for, after all, though he is barely eight, he is no longer a baby to be temporized with.

When I returned to the den, leaving the door ajar, Evan, half in darkness half in firelight, was playing the violin; he did not know of the turmoil that was raging in the heart of his little son above stairs, nor did I then tell him, because ever since the twins came I have grown to feel the truth of father's saying, that one of woman's seven deadly domestic sins is the saving up of tales of childish naughtiness until the father's return, so that his home-coming is a time of general execution and strained relations all round, instead of the natural one of rejoicing, bringing the reward of cheerfulness for his day's toil.

Evan was in a quiet mood and played restfully, using the instrument instead of speech between us, until I too joined him in that tone land of conscious unconsciousness. I think it must have been this that made me oblivious of footsteps or opening doors, though finally, when Evan paused, I had a feeling that there was some one in the hall. Going to the door, I found a bundle composed of Ian, nightclothes, and a quilt huddled in the nook between the old clock and the door, listening with his heart in his eyes; and now the angry flush had left his cheeks, and they were wet with tears. Putting my arm about him, I led him into the den shadows, giving Evan a faint sign, which, however, he understood, to

go on playing, while I gathered Ian into the seat in the ingle-nook. At first he lay quite still, with his head in my lap, but presently he began to stir and draw himself up, until his arms closed tight behind my head while he whispered, "I'm *very* sorry now, Barbara; I wasn't, but something came out of father's fiddle and made me think so."

Taking a hint from this, when I heard they wanted extra boy voices for the Easter music down at the church, I took both Richard and Ian to the choir practice one afternoon, and found to my surprise that they not only had good voices, but a certain musical insight as well, that greatly pleased the choir master; and so I entered them and promised that they should attend as regularly as the boys who are in the special training-school.

Richard enjoys it all and sings a high treble as easily as my canary-bird in the window, liquid as running water, but as colourless. Ian's voice is alto, and already has the sort of throb in it that makes one listener's breath come short and fast; and when he is at rest and stands watching the organist's fingers press the keys, something tells me that there lies his vocation as well as the heavenly power that will turn the passion of his nature into a force for the good of his fellow-men.

Richard a physician, Ian an organist! I wonder if it will so come about? At Whitsuntide, if all goes well, they will take their places with the chorus choir for the first time, and this leaves me free to make my Easter visit to Lavinia Cortright, for I would not be absent at that first appearance of the boys in their white cottas for worlds. There is always something angelic about the veriest gamin whose childish form is clad in the white robe, with the mystic colours shed by the stained glass windows painting a halo about his curly head and the music rapture in his eyes. Then to watch one's very own — ah, what hidden wisdom is there in the fact that pleasure and pain are so often travelling companions, I wonder?

Lavinia Cortright writes in her letter of yesterday, "If you do not come down at Easter, we may surprise you by going to Oaklands unawares, now Evan reports that the Alton cottage will be spick-and-span both in- and ex-ternally in a fortnight. By the way, we have decided to call the place 'Greenwich Inn.' This is Martin's suggestion, out of compliment to the section of New York where I was born, and he has hunted up an ancient sign-board, that I believe he stole from that quarter early in his college career, to hang over the gate!

“Why are we thinking of moving out of town in middle April, instead of May, as we planned? Why, for several reasons, the chief being connected with Martin’s keen sense of hearing. He is about to begin the serious work of a new book, the final blending of the facts, fancies, and pictures real and imaginary into the story, and he needs must have quiet. Now our house is very peaceful as long as winter is here or March winds sweep across the open fronted gardens; but when April comes in a genial mood, and the temptation is to drop the top window-sash, an assortment of noises enters pell-mell that would put to flight the entire troop of fancies of Pandora’s box! There are many advantages, as well as a few difficulties, in living in a neighbourhood of departed traditions, and on a corner at that; not a small one being to become reconciled to the musical tastes of the neighbours, which appear to be of several schools! This morning, directly in front of the house, a piano-organ emitted the infectious strains of *Bedelia*; an elaborate affair on wheels, combining organ, drum, and cymbals, and drawn by a nerveless horse in the side street, wrestled vigorously with the Tannhäuser March; while in the little back court that lies between the new skyscraper and the old tenements, an ordinary hand-

organ was doing Edgardo to death in the final strains of *Lucia*! Martin is not nervous, but this was more than he could stand. In addition I will tell you in confidence that he is badly infected with the gardening fever that *re*-claimed me the moment I set eyes upon the catalogues you sent. In my back-yard-garden days, my choice of course was limited by location; but now, my boundaries being four acres wide, ambition has grown accordingly.

“Martin has ordered a large hotbed to be made, bought bell-glasses, many garden books, and a steamer trunk full of packages of seeds and roots! He has read of some philosopher whose choicest thoughts came to him when he was picking beetles from his potato-vines and squash bugs from his melons and cucumbers. He also longs to begin, and I really believe will be sadly disappointed if his crops are bugless, which is a condition little likely to happen!

“He is greatly delighted at the prospect of having his copying done intelligently and yet out of the house, by one of the Crandon girls. This also happily settles the matter that was becoming a serious problem to me, of having a resident secretary. It is always a pleasure to have visits from friends, but the ever presence of a third person, — I do not be-

lieve I could bear it, especially atop of my observations of the usual woman errant during the past year. I'm either too old or too young to make the venture,—I rather think the latter. If either Lois or Sukey can come to us on Saturdays, the matter of formal letter answering can also be nicely disposed of.

“By the way, the boarding place that your father suggests for what Martin calls my ‘poet in disguise,’ the shoemaker, will do admirably. I have spoken to him about it, and he seemed greatly pleased, for some unknown reason, also to know that the house is on a hill with other hills round about, and that it is in a rocky country. We must get him off before warm weather really sets in, for he is beginning to grow very weak. The woman janitress of the house, who is a Polish Hebrew, an unusual nationality for this part of town so far from the Ghetto, insists that in spite of his facial characteristics ‘Johann’ (for that is the only name by which he is known) is a Crist,—her shortening of the term Christian. Be this as it may, his face bears the melancholy, patient look that the Hebrew wears when he has conquered materialism, and he was evidently born to a state of life above his present condition. In this belief of mine Mr. Chatterton, the new vicar of St. David’s,

— himself a keen student of the phases of human nature seen among the so-called poor, — quite agrees. The vicar has been twice with me to see the man and once alone; but though he has sometimes for a moment seemed inclined to speak of himself, the mood passed. Perhaps you may fathom him, — you have been to many such bedsides with your father.”

* * * * *

Welladay! Providence seems to be favouring Sukey's efforts to make a home; for not only will she begin her "school garden" with fifteen pupils, but at the interview between Mrs. Jenks-Smith and Jane last week it was decided that the latter is to go home to her sisters over Sundays, during the Oaklands season at least. This will keep them all in touch, besides being a safety-valve for both Jane and Mrs. Jenks-Smith, and free her from the restraint that every one must feel under new conditions. Dear soul, she has always had such a big heart, concealed behind a very thin screen of worldly-wiseness, that I felt quite sure that it would burn through some day; while by thinking for Jane she will improve herself immensely. The fact that she has stopped the use of face powder is in itself an instantaneous advantage, which will increase as the weather grows warmer, for Mrs. Jenks-Smith's nose

of a summer's day was simply a marshmallow in high relief!

* * * * *

Yes, I will leave Martha with the boys and go to Lavinia Cortright on Thursday for four whole days, and Evan will bring the boys down for Easter.

I love the country, none better than I, and I would not live anywhere else; but I like to visit the city at Christmas and again in springtime, and see and feel the push and throb of the race, and myself a part of it! In our bleak New England country the spring is but groping at Eastertide. In full growth of flower and leaf all nature waits to enshrine Whitsunday, when the fluttering dogwood petals on the wood-edge typify the heavenly dove, and the scarlet-spurred columbine between the rocks the sacred tongues of fire. Then, too, the birds of flame also are with us, the tanager, oriole, redstart, and, perchance, that wandering firebrand, the Blackburnian warbler.

But in New York, of all times of the year, however cold or dreary may be the weather, Easter is the day of flowers, even the swish and swirl of the pool being almost hid by their petals. All through the week before, when, metaphorically at least, the churches are gloom-draped and the music is keyed in unison, the flowers bloom forth, not alone in the florists' con-

servatories, but in the windows of unrented shops, at the market stalls, in every nook that will hold a stand along the curb line, and in wagons that thread in and out back streets, bringing fragrance to unaccustomed places; while along the shopping avenues flowers of velvet, silk, or gauze pack the windows and run riot over hats of as many shapes and colours!

There is much fun poked at the vanity of Easter millinery and of the great importance of a woman's hat; yet, after all, it comes from the underlying eagerness for renewal in all its variations, — the turning of the back on cold, darkness, and despair, and blooming forth anew, — and it is therefore lovable.

I shall not soon forget a little scene in a great department shop that occurred one day, a year ago. The counters and tables were heaped with artificial blossoms of all grades and prices, from those that really rivalled nature's work down to the merely tawdry, which, twisted into spare wreaths and scanty bunches, covered a table that bore a label — "Fifteen and twenty-five cents." Before this stood a woman clad in threadbare black, balancing a baby on one arm, while she divided her attention with two small girls who were gazing greedily at the flowers. After a discussion as profound as if a diamond necklace were under consideration, two wreaths of flimsy

muslin wild flowers were selected for equally perishable muslin and glue hats. They would not last a week, perhaps, and to an outsider would only serve to accentuate their owners' poverty; and yet the look of complete happiness they brought to those two little pinched faces not only robbed the purchase of its folly, but made it seem worth while.

We women were never meant to educate ourselves out of the little joys of life, any more than that logic should be pushed into the place of love, or the brain developed to the starvation of the heart. I've often doubted if I am fully civilized, in the academic interpretation of the word; for not only do I feel a savage delight and kinship with the soil anew each season, when spring loosens the bonds, while the city spring signs stir me no less, but the fluttering ribbons and nodding posies fly to my head, and the street music of the hand-organs sinks to my toes, and it requires more than a slight effort to repress myself. Evan has had often to remind me that "stepping it" along a public sidewalk, even in company with one's husband and after dark, is apt to be regarded suspiciously.

Yes, I will go to Lavinia Cortright's on Thursday, for this year, in addition to everything else, there is Ivory Steele to be met!

* * * * *

Monday, April 13th. — Easter over and the vast music an oft-echoing memory; but who could dream of the experience crammed into the few short days between my leaving home and the return?

I arrived at "The Oasis," as Martin Cortright laughingly calls their home, in late afternoon, under cover of a smart April shower, that caused the stunted maples along the curb not only to rejoice but to put off all restraint and throw the winter jackets of their flower tassels broadcast into the street below.

Lavinia grows more daintily pretty as the years go on — a sort of Dresden china beauty, clad always suitably in silvery tints, with only faint suggestions of colour like an exquisite pastel. As to Martin, that dear, hesitating bachelor of yore, he has come to be as nearly a keen-witted man of affairs as would be possible without losing the rarity of the other charm.

I've always thought it a pity when circumstances cause a woman to wait to fall in love until the time has passed when she may do so completely and without reservation; but with Lavinia it rather seems as if the first love of her youth, that she hid away even from herself because its object belonged to another, had never grown cold, but increased in strength until

God bade it blossom anew, a perfect flower though of an autumnal vine.

There were two figures other than Martin in his study when, after laying off my things in the cosey guest-room I knew so well, I went to join Lavinia for the usual cup of tea, — a man and a woman. As I was duly presented and heard the names Miss Steele and Rev. Mr. Chatterton, their figures slowly separated themselves from the dark background. The man, the new vicar of St. David's, was tall and broad-shouldered, with the strong yet refined face that happily nowadays we so often meet in the new ministry that requires that a clergyman should be no less a man, and is so fast dispelling the illusion that frail physique and piety, a narrow brain and theology, are interchangeable propositions. He had dropped in for a few moments after the four o'clock service, both to rest in the most truly restful home in his parish, and to confer with Lavinia upon some matter of charity in which they were both interested.

The woman, Ivory Steele, looked out at me from a drapery background, as she had when I had first seen her ; but in her street gown of pale gray, that neither contrasted with nor supplemented the opaque white of her complexion, she looked less distinguished, while the sooty line of her hair was indi-

visible from the outline of her close turban hat. After our eyes had met, she stepped forward into the light and, shaking hands, made the usual remark of having heard so much of me from Mrs. Cortright, a stereotyped form of expression that, though capable of meaning everything, usually implies nothing. Then I slipped into a seat back of the tea-table, for I wanted to be as nearly a spectator as good feeling would allow.

It was evident that my entrance had interrupted a somewhat heated discussion upon the spiritual and material, in which Mr. Chatterton and Mrs. Cortright were paired. Ivory Steele was outspoken for the material, or, as she termed it, rational side of life, while Martin was hesitating between his loyalty to his wife and politeness to his guest.

"Why not come to Saint David's next Sunday morning and give me a hearing?" pleaded Mr. Chatterton.

"Sunday being the only morning of the week that I have free for rest, I follow the example of so many of your sex and stay in bed."

"In the afternoon, then; I strive to fit that service to the special needs of the many who are hampered or over-weary."

"Sunday afternoon I always set apart for doing

my weekly mending," Ivory answered, with such a smile of perfect and almost kittenish good nature that it was impossible to discover whether she was in jest or earnest.

"At least you will concede the beauty and spiritual comfort of the allegory of the resurrection, if you regard it only as such," urged Mr. Chatterton, rising from his chair and stepping forward in his eagerness, while he fixed his eyes upon her face, as if he deemed it impossible to read but one answer there.

Ivory returned this gaze calmly, and then said, with quiet and unemotional deliberation, such as one uses in an everyday matter, "On the contrary, I think the idea of a life stretching on endlessly before us, whether we will or no, is inexpressibly distressing and not to be compared in advantage with certain and complete dissolution."

As the clear, cutting voice ceased, after uttering the words that the profoundest mind would hesitate long before giving form, I saw a shiver pass over the vicar's great frame, which he vainly tried to suppress. Lavinia tightened her grip of the tea-cup she was holding, while Martin dropped a handful of newspaper clippings that Miss Steele had brought him, and busied himself in the noncommittal business of picking them up.

I was the only one of the group who had not moved in any way ; for the idea had suddenly come to me that her words had no real meaning, but were merely a part of a certain pose she had at some time thought it either clever or convenient to assume, until now it had become a part of her being and usurped the place of her real self. Yet it was to me she spoke, and her words confirmed my opinion.

“I fear I have shocked you, Mrs. Evan, by my plainness of speech ; but we women who go out into the world soon learn to formulate rapidly and thus guard against all possible misunderstanding, thinking frankness a better shield than the sentiment that domesticity fosters.”

It was a deliberate challenge, thrown without the slightest provocation ; and as I hesitated to accept it and perhaps do no good and further distress Lavinia, Mr. Chatterton, glancing hastily at the clock, said he must go ; as he passed out the maid brought in a card on a tray, and Lavinia, picking it up, read aloud the name, “Carhart Latham,” while, as she spoke, its owner entered.

Holding out both hands, Lavinia Cortright looked brightly into the somewhat stern, sunburned face that towered above her, with its closely cut tawny head,

keen gray eyes, and blond mustache, saying, "I thought you had forgotten me, — see how unjust I was!" After he had been presented to Ivory Steele, somewhat more formally I thought than was our hostess's wont, she introduced me as the friend of his sister, Sylvia Bradford, with the half dozen words that put us both at our ease, and we fell easily to chatting by the tea-table. At least Lavinia and Mr. Latham chatted, and again, nothing loath, I became a listener, only finding it necessary to keep ready an intelligent monosyllable when Lavinia launched forth upon the fascination of Sylvia's baby daughter, or the attraction of Oaklands and the surrounding country. Ivory Steele returned meanwhile to her papers and a critical argument with Martin Cortright, in which I heard, during pauses on my side of the room, that Martin was sorely pressed to maintain his position, and learned that Ivory was not only a brilliant conversationalist on certain lines, but mistress of a sort of inferential knowledge that might easily pass current for profound thought.

"How long do you stay with us?" asked Lavinia of her *vis-à-vis*.

"Until early autumn, if my present plans hold. The ranch is in good condition, but my father's attitude has wholly changed, and he seems to feel that a

time has come in his affairs when he needs me, — in fact wishes me to remain for good. It may possibly be that I shall. There are many business interests to keep me here part of the year, if only I could divine some scheme for living outside the city, — eight years of life in the open are not good training for life in New York !”

“Is it eight years ?” queried Lavinia, a trifle thoughtlessly.

“Yes,” was the laconic reply, but the quick, womanly glance of sympathetic understanding that followed the words instantly outweighed them, and the next moment all five of us were involved in a general conversation.

Presently Ivory Steele arose to go, glancing about for her various belongings, — jacket, feather boa, gloves, etc., — which Martin rapidly collected while Ivory herself moved slowly toward the mirror in the hall, with a gracefully sort of undulating motion that in a less self-possessed woman might have degenerated into sidling, where she adjusted her veil with the greatest care and slipped her arms into the coat that Martin courteously held for her, as if being thus served was a matter of course hardly deserving recognition. Ah, but the modern woman errant is a subtle creature doubly armed, — in the right hand holding

liberty as a sword well to the fore, and bearing in the left as a shield the "spell womanly" to ward off all defeat!

Yet with it all Carthy Latham had barely glanced at her in greeting or at parting, while it seemed to me he gave a sigh of relief as the door closed, when he readily assented to the proposition to stop to dinner. But it was an understood thing among his friends that young Latham, though immensely popular with men, was, if not a woman-hater out and out, at least an avoider of women in general almost to the point of rudeness.

I hardly wonder at it, either. Poor fellow! what must it be to have the illusions of young life rent by one's own mother's scant sense of honour? But then the divine law of recompense is such that the wound one woman made another woman some day perchance may heal! I wonder how women can ever think lightly of their special lot in life, when they realize how much of this divine healing is committed to their charge. Perhaps some never realize, and that is the trouble. I think we all need bigger hearts, that the supply of love may be sufficient to leaven the material pressure of learning.

Neil and Janet Gordon happened in during the evening, and, both being old friends of Carthy Latham's, we all had a very pleasant hour. Lavinia

and Martin have, it seems, reëstablished, at least among their intimates, the custom of evening calls. And pray how otherwise may a woman see her husband's friends,—at least without the formality of set and often inconveniently binding appointments?

Neil Gordon is, as Lavinia wrote, a most fascinating sort of fellow, while Janet has an equal individuality, and together they make a most unusual couple, thoroughly in accord and interested in each other's affairs; yet, strangely enough it seemed to me, Janet has never chanced to meet Ivory Steele, though she has been in Mr. Gordon's office in a confidential position for nearly a year.

I felt strangely alone and homesick for Evan all of a sudden,—it is something that invariably happens when I am alone in town and see a happy young couple. I expected to get over it when I passed the solemn boundary marked "thirty," but if anything, it has been rather worse. Evan has promised to come in early to-morrow, bringing the boys and all the hyacinths, daffodils, and early tulips the garden affords for Martin, who loves the product of Dutch bulbs above all other flowers.

* * * * *

What did Ivory Steele think of me and my dumbness, when I longed to strike back, I wonder?

As I lay in bed, watching the shadow of the street lamp flicker on the wall, my Familiar Spirit, nestling close for company, as it has a pert habit of doing when Evan is away, whispered directly in my ear: "She never thought of you at all. You do not count! You are to her simply one of the herd, that, lacking the mental discipline of college training, is satisfied to huddle in contented sloth behind old traditions!" How aggravating one's Familiar Spirit may become in speaking one side only of the truth.

"Mental discipline, indeed!" I muttered sleepily and sententiously to my pillow. "What does she know about it? Is it not mental discipline of the most extreme sort to be a commuter's wife and to have had early breakfast ready on time for eight winters, and, real illness excepted, to have been there to pour the coffee, time the eggs, and spread the bread with the butter that facilitates rapid transit?"

XI

DIE GELBE VIOLET

April 13th: Evening. Evan took the early train on Friday morning and appeared at the Cortrights' with the boys as we were leaving the breakfast table. Here at home breakfast, of week-days, is an alert meal of close connections and cheerful brevity of speech, but at the Cortrights' it wears a quality of comfortable leisure that is very soothing to the guest.

The meal is served at the exact hour of the arrival of the morning mail, in a well-aired but not cold room, with a hearth fire for greeting so long as there is the shadow of an excuse for it. The coffee biggin and quaint old silver kettle, with its alcohol lamp lighted, are placed on a low side-table and wheeled beside Lavinia; the mistress's paper is laid by her plate, together with her letters, the master's being by his, and the maid withdraws. Deliberation is the order of things; newspapers are neither under ban nor allowed to create unsociability, but merely serve as a species of tonic to reestablish the mental tone,

the mixture guaranteed to produce the best results being a little food, a little news, and a little companionship, repeated to suit individual tastes, so that when the meal is over each has unobtrusively gauged the attitude of the other, and the day begins on the safe plane of mutual understanding.

Several warm, moist nights had done wonders for my early bulbs, and I was almost as much surprised as Lavinia at the quantity the box contained. Filling one entire corner was a mass of gold-hearted wall-flowers, in the perfect condition of vapourous fragrance so seductive that I could not resist keeping a generous handful for my belt, while Evan and I arranged the rest of the posies in the library, where the variety of jugs, mugs, and bowls seemed made on purpose for the short-stemmed among them. The boys accompanied Lavinia on her morning visit below stairs, for later on Evan had promised to take them to that mysterious region known to commuters' families as "down town."

Half an hour later, when they had departed and Lavinia and I met in the library to plan our day's doings, a double ring at the door, together with the sounds of argument, in which the maid's voice was supplemented by the shrill tones of an uncouth dialect, made us pause.

"My mudder, she tell me that I come till I tell it at the lady!" persisted the childish voice, rising to a wail.

Instantly "the lady" made herself visible to the eager petitioner, and I followed into the hall. In the doorway was a group of four curiously assorted children; the youngest, clad in a single red flannel garment, was barely able to walk, a feat, however, learned so much before the right time that its poor little legs were bowed in a half circle. Next came two boys of perhaps six and seven, dressed in unadjusted handed-down clothes, made for lads twice their size, so that the waistcoat that one wore in lieu of a coat hung to his knees, giving him a dwarfish look. The eldest, and spokesman of the group, was a short, thick-set girl of about twelve, with coarse red hair, eyes that blinked painfully owing to some inflammation of the lids, broad ears set almost at right angles to her head and heavy with thick, glittering earrings. All four had the drooping, peaked noses that mark a certain type of the Hebrew race and give to young faces that gleam of premature shrewdness that is at once piteous and appalling.

"Do you wish to see me?" asked Lavinia, pleasantly, checking her impulse to recoil from this com-

bination of unwashed flesh and street dirt that almost surrounded her as she came forward.

"Yes, lady, my mudder she say that I shall come and tell to you," the girl replied, ducking her head with a sort of cringing gesture that was wholly belied by the boldness of her gaze, that instantly fastened itself upon Lavinia's dainty toilet, starting at the slipper buckles, and climbing eye over eye up the enamelled buttons that fastened the front of the morning robe, pausing a moment to rest among the ribbons that, clasped by a buckle, hung from the belt, and fairly plunging into the lace that draped the waist and was caught about the smooth, white throat by a pearl butterfly.

So busy were the greedy eyes that the brain and tongue for a moment forgot their errand, and, giving vent to a sound between a grunt and a sigh, she asked, sweeping Mrs. Cortright's person with a swift glance, "Say, lady, is it you should buy all that togedder new? That should be a fine lace—I know a man vod gif you a big money for him, ven you can like!" and at the same moment she darted forward and felt the cobweb fabric with a grimy paw.

"Who is your mother, and what was it that she wished you to tell me?" continued Lavinia, checking the advance gently but decidedly.

"She can be Mrs. Polinski, and lif behind your house back in. She can be over all our house and she say to me, 'Minka, go and tell it to that so very ritch lady that Johann, what the shoes can make togedder, shall be so bad he can no more get up. Und tell her that it is our best room he buy to lif in,—the big room that has a window,—and to-morrow he should buy it once more, but he cannot of that speak, and will the lady pay for him?'"

The puzzled expression instantly vanished from Lavinia's face, as she motioned the children to go, saying briefly, "Go back and tell your mother that I will come myself in fifteen minutes,—you hear, fifteen minutes!"

As the door closed behind their reluctant exit she sank on the hall settle, saying in a reproachful tone half to herself and half to me: "It is a week since I have been there, but Mr. Chatterton sent the Settlement doctor to see him then, and he said that Johann might live months and even rally for a time when he got to the country and sunlight, and he promised to go again whenever Johann sent for him. I suppose it is some sudden change of weather and he has taken cold." Then, seeing that I looked puzzled, she added, pointing backward through the dining

room, "It is the musical shoemaker, for whom you and your father found the boarding place at Pine Ridge. We hoped to get him off next week. I must go round at once and telephone the doctor to meet me there. I'm sorry to leave now, but I cannot ask Mr. Chatterton, for he has a service this morning. Martin would go of course, but he has not the temperament for this sort of thing any more than I have his in burrowing for dates, so I never take the risk of paining him."

Then I remembered what I had for the moment forgotten, — it was Good Friday.

"Let me go with you," I begged; "father and I usually spend this day together at the hospital in trying to cheer the very sick, for it is a day that I cannot bear being shut in a building with the emotion of the service pressing on me; it stops my very breath."

Lavinia turned, and, laying her hand on mine, raised her eyes to my face with a look that told that she too was keyed to the string-snapping, and said: "Yes, come with me then, it will be a great comfort to me and is most fitting. Do you realize, Barbara, that we are going to minister to one they call a Jew?"

In a few moments she was ready, and we went out

into the chary April sunshine that had followed the rain of the night before. It was so suddenly warm that I left my jacket open and but for prudence would have carried it on my arm. What a contrast two faces of the same city block may present, and the turning of a corner is often the only boundary between middle-class comfort and neatness and a condition of squalor where the ashes heaped in many pails and cans upon the walk in front of every house, as well as the children playing in the gutters and the women in the doorways, cheapening eyeless fish from the street peddler, tell their tale!

I noticed that Lavinia was evidently counting the houses after we turned the corner where there was a low blacksmith shop, and she stopped before the fourth, where a second doorway opened into a narrow passage that eventually led to a rear building. At the entrance, and quite blocking the way, was a very fat woman, looking up and down the avenue in evident anxiety. She was an older counterpart in feature and colouring of the girl who had come to the house, and evidently the mother of the visiting quartet, as the youngest member was at that moment clinging to her skirt.

Catching sight of Mrs. Cortright, she broke into an overpowering stream of Polish English, and even

after the procession that she headed started through the narrow alley, she stopped so often to turn and reiterate her explanations that I began to fear that she might pause at an unexpected angle and block the way so effectually that we should be obliged to back out !

Presently we came to daylight, that is as much daylight as could find place in the twenty-foot court between two buildings that were meshed together by a network of lines from which hung garments of every description and hue, and of materials not usually considered washable.

A second doorway, broader but more battered and out of plane than the first, led to the two-story brick building, inside of which we were again enveloped in twilight, until Mrs. Polinski, going up the rickety old stairs, of the pattern that have a square landing at the turn, threw open the door directly at their top, letting fall across us a shaft of sunlight from the single window opposite at the only quarter-hour of the day that such a beam might enter.

Lavinia Cortright glanced in, gave the woman some swift directions together with a coin, and bade her station one of the children at the outer door, that the doctor might find his way more quickly on his arrival.

The room, which was of fair size, contained a common bureau, a small table with an oil stove, a coffee pot, and a few dishes upon it, a chair, a cobbler's bench, a wooden chest, and a narrow bed. Upon this the man lay, the light falling across in such a way as to throw the face into full relief. It was not an old face, with all its unkempt gauntness, even though the beard and untrimmed hair that matted about it were streaked with gray. The eyes were half closed, and the hands that clutched the coverlet to his breast were well shaped and of slender make, — it evidently was his trade alone that had broadened the ends of the fingers.

For a moment I thought that he was dead, but the hands moved and pressed the chest yet tighter, and a paroxysm of coughing shook the wasted frame until it ceased again from sheer lack of capacity.

I touched one of the hands, and vainly tried to count the pulse, for he would not relax the grip that held them together on his breast; but the touch alone told of burning fever, and when the coughing ceased I heard the quality of breathing that I knew, by many a visit with father to hospital ward and charcoal camp, spelled pneumonia. A little coffee in a cup and some bits of bread and tinned meat, evidently several days old, told the story. The man

had been taken suddenly ill, and, already weakened by disease, succumbed, while the fact that the rest of the floor was used for a store-room by the carpenter shop in front, left him with no neighbours; and it was only when Mrs. Polinski, of whom he rented the room, went up that morning from her cavern below, to see what were the prospects for the payment of the rent due on the morrow, that his plight was discovered.

Presently the woman returned with the little jar of beef extract for which she had been sent; but Lavinia, agreeing with me that it was doubtful if we could make him swallow anything but perhaps some liquor, poured a little whiskey from a small flask she had brought; but Johann clenched his teeth even though he seemed unconscious of our presence.

"He shall be deat, he shall be deat, und ver gets I mine money? Ai, ai! but the ritch and so good lady, she bay for him, und someding ofer for the trouble, for he be a Crist, it may be like she," her voice at first wailing dismally and then softening to an oily tone, intended to be unctuous cajolery.

"Go down," said Mrs. Cortright, so sternly and with such an emphatic gesture that the woman slunk out muttering; but she only went as far as the landing, where she crouched on the stairs.

Johann muttered uneasily, and, raising himself on one elbow, opened eyes that saw nothing save through the mists of delirium, and then fell back in complete collapse. At the same instant a man's voice sounded from the stairs, speaking impatiently to Mrs. Polinski, who was evidently beginning anew the plaint of her unpaid rent, and the doctor came into the room.

Compassing the situation at a glance, he exchanged a few words with Mrs. Cortright and immediately gave the man a hypodermic of whiskey, while his fingers sought the pulse in the now relaxed wrist, saying, "We *may* be able to revive him; give me some whiskey in a glass and kindly heat some water and prepare a little beef juice, for pneumonia and lack of food combined mean the end to a man in his weak state."

How hot the room grew!—for the oil stove flared and smoked and I suddenly became conscious of the permeating and subtle odour of the wallflowers that were still in my belt.

As the doctor sat watching Johann's face, the eyes opened and fixed themselves upon him. He took this return of consciousness as an opportunity to force a spoonful of whiskey between the lips that were now parted. The effect was instant-

neous. Struggling to a sitting posture the man passed one hand across his eyes, covering them for a moment. From where I stood close to the bed on the opposite side from the doctor, I could see that the sensitive nostrils were quivering like those of a wild animal when he detects a puzzling odour in the air.

The hand left the eyes and passed over the forehead, as if its groping were in search of some thought that had escaped from memory itself. Another spoonful of the stimulant was given and the same portion of the meat juice.

Suddenly he turned his eyes, filled with an intense radiant light, full upon me. Then, sitting without support and stretching out both arms, his eyes dropped until they fastened on the flowers at my belt. With a sharp-drawn breath and wild note of joy he cried, in German tongue, "Ach, Gott, Lise! Lise! thou hast come at last! And bringest thy token — die gelbe Violet — die gelbe Violet —" So saying, he snatched the bouquet from me with fierce eagerness, pressed the flowers to his lips, and then sank back, the blossoms crushed against his breast and his eyes seemingly feasting upon the vision they had brought to speed his parting.

That was all!

* * * * *

"Has he any friends, or shall I attend to the formalities and notify the city to take charge?" asked the doctor of Lavinia. "By the way, what was his full name?" he added, as he took pencil and notebook from his pocket to jot down the necessary memoranda.

"I do not know," she replied, thus answering the first and last questions together. "As to the burial, we will attend to that; he used to play the violin so beautifully when I worked in my garden — he must have once known happier days than these — he — he — has loved and suffered — such should not lie in the potter's field —" and the doctor spoke gently in acquiescence, in spite of what he, accustomed to daily scenes of poverty, may have thought of Lavinia's sentiment.

The doctor opened his watch, and glancing over his shoulder I saw that we had been in the tenement for two hours. While we were hesitating what to do, new footsteps trod the stairs and Mr. Chatterton entered, coming immediately from church, having heard that Lavinia had sent for the doctor; and to him briefly we told the story.

"Are there no letters about that may give a clew to his identity?" he asked. "I supposed him to be a Hebrew, though I have no proof."

"I fancy he may have something hanging about

his neck ; his hands always seemed to seek his breast unconsciously, as if making sure that a treasure he guarded there was safe," Lavinia answered.

"Probably merely the difficulty of breathing," said the practical doctor, but at the same time passing his hand within the loosely fastened shirt. "Yes, here is something," he cried, at the same time drawing forth a carved silver crucifix of quaint design, though much worn, which was suspended by a chain woven of what must have once been golden hair, but was now soiled and frayed.

"Lise gave him that," said Lavinia softly, in tone of perfect conviction.

"She must have been a Christian, he a Jew," chimed in the doctor, in an awestruck voice.

"If he wore the symbol on his heart, why not within it?" said Mr. Chatterton. "If there are no claimants, I will give him burial; it is the least that we can do either for Lise or Johann."

"Maybe he shall have money hid," croaked Mrs. Polinski, who had crept in unnoticed and was beginning to pry about.

"Go down and bring me a receipt for the rent, and I will pay you," ordered Lavinia, and as the woman began to mutter, the doctor took her by the shoulders and put her out.

"I think you had better go now, you can do no more,—it has been a trying scene for you all," said Mr. Chatterton; "we will arrange the rest," and so we came away. As I turned I framed my lips to make one request, but reading it in my eyes the vicar said, "Ah, yes, I understand, the wallflowers shall not be taken from him."

Out in the street the sunshine seemed almost blinding, and the past hours like a dream from which we had with difficulty awakened.

No, it was all real enough, for there at the bakery next the forge the children were going in and out in crowds, for was not this Good Friday, when six fresh, light, hot cross buns may be bought for five cents, even though on the eastern side of town the children of the Ghetto must munch unleavened bread?

* * * * *

Easter evening Mr. Chatterton came in to say that the only person who could be found that knew aught of the stranger was the dealer of whom he had bought the few materials for his work, and he could tell but little save that he had come of good people in the fatherland and had once been a musician of the opera there. All the papers that could be found in the chest, where the precious violin was the only other tenant, was a picture of a young woman either

in stage or peasant dress, and a letter yellow, soiled, and written in cramped German characters, the date being ten years back and the postmark carefully cut out. It was a hopeful letter, expectant of a speedy meeting, and the wording told by inference that the barrier was something that the man alone could overcome. The signature was the single word *Lise*, and folded in the paper was a spray of wallflowers!

* * * * *

The boys were glad to go to bed early, being heavy with the sort of leg-weary sleep that even the excitement of new scenes cannot dispel; and as I knew that Lavinia must have many little things concerning Johann to talk over with Martin and Mr. Chatterton, Evan and I came early also to the pleasant little alcove in the guest-room, where without other light than from the street lamps, we lounged comfortably, and looked out at the groups of people passing up and down the broad roadway.

“Did you see anybody in particular to-day, or was every one taking a holiday like ourselves?” I asked.

“I lunched with Neil Gordon. I went into the office of the *Morning Despatch*, scarcely expecting to find him; but he was there, sending a cart load of books off to the various reviewers. As his literary supplement comes out on Saturdays, his work for the

day was well over, and he insisted that I should walk across to his home and take luncheon. Whenever I meet Neil I always resolve to see more of him, for he is not only the best of all-round companions, but he has a sort of broad cosmopolitan culture that you will not only find in few men of his age, but only in a few centres such as London and New York.

“When I am with him I always find that difficult question of the distinction between culture and mere education not only answered but illustrated. Culture certainly implies education, but what is called education—the going through college on a train of cars composed of a specified series of graded book experiences—certainly does not imply culture or does not in itself, as far as I can see, fit either men or women for life itself.”

“You know father always says that he thinks the mistake is that many people put college in the place of life, and are often so long in finding out and getting over the mistake that they are handicapped ever after.”

“Well, he is right in a way, that is if the thing is taken up on general principles, and not as the beginning of a definite career; and I was thinking this afternoon for that reason the college business is more upsetting to women than to men, because for some reason not apparent to what you sometimes call

my 'rainproof English brain' a woman is always applauded if she goes to college, and bases her attitude of importance accordingly high, so that when she steps down to the everyday sidewalk the jump is proportionately greater.

"It's a funny feminine bit of illogic on the part of the theoretically logical that the woman who insists upon her equal right to do everything that a man may, and succeeds in getting a footing beside him on his particular step of life's ladder, should often turn about and expect applause for every act, and speak plaintively of the strain of being both man and woman (which is perfectly true but the *a priori* that she at one period denied) and declares that man is no longer chivalrous if he does not absolutely help her climb into his very shoes. Sometimes I feel that filling our business offices with women is an injustice to ourselves, for we must either change our ethics often or be brutal, neither of which is pleasant.

"I don't suppose it ever occurred to you, Bab, but it must be a good deal of a strain at times to have the 'ever womanly' at both ends of the route. Theoretically your secretary wishes to be treated like the male clerks. Actually? No. Neither can you do it, if you are a gentleman! If it is a raging storm, you know that your male bookkeeper is as able

to go out for his luncheon as you yourself. If a woman holds the position, you see and feel through the back of your head that she is looking out the window and making up her mind to go hollow, which means poor work all the afternoon, rather than be soaked to pulp.

“ You have a wife and are somewhat on the inside track of woman’s construction, ailments, and dislikes ; therefore you send out for luncheon, and having once done it the matter becomes a custom. In eight cases out of ten the attention is accepted on the business basis that prompted it, twice it is presumed on, but in either case the balance and independence of office life are destroyed.”

This was a very long oration indeed from Evan, who is the pink of politeness to everything feminine, from the one-eyed apple-woman in the Bridgeton station up ; but at the same time he, being English, does not feel called upon to conceal his opinion under equivocation in order to be polite.

“ By the way, I saw Neil Gordon’s confidential clerk, assistant editor, or whatever she is, in whom you are so much interested, this morning ! ”

I had been waiting for this, because with a long experience of a tendency that Evan has to circle about rather intangible topics, I knew that he had

never approached the verge of the complex woman question on general principles.

"How did you like her?" I ventured.

"She certainly has a very pleasing personality, ladylike manners, is clever, and understands equally well both her business and the art of dressing, and yet under an apparent calmness that seems to say, 'I understand; you may treat me like an equal in intelligence,' there is something in those queer wine-jelly-coloured eyes of hers that says, as she looks straight at you (women all look straight at one nowadays, which is comfort)—'You think that I am easy to read, but I am not; my motives are too vast and high for your comprehension, and that is why I am, and women like me, always misjudged!'

"Meanwhile I think that she would not hesitate to try any sort of experiment that came to her mind and calmly record the result as net experience. This is the very devil of it,—for a fairly attractive woman with a bent for trying human experiments under the name of what she calls 'mental recreation' can do more lasting harm than all the poisons in a chemist's shop!"

"Go on," I said, applauding silently and laughing in a half-mocking fashion. "I always knew the English were inelastic, but I never before found a

man among them guilty of such preternatural second sight!"

"Nonsense! you know exactly what I mean. You said as much yourself after you had seen the girl yesterday, that her face had kept coming before you ever since you first saw her at Christmas, and all that; by George, it is the same with me, — sort of uncanny, like that weird woman of Poe's that the man couldn't get away from — *Prunella* or *Morella*, was it? — that had a gigantic intellect and 'sat with her icy hand in his and raked the ashes of a dead philosophy' or words to that effect — anything to be mysterious and clammy."

Evan was so serious and funny that the laugh I began in mockery ended by being in earnest, and I went closer to the window and perched on the arm of the big Morris chair and tousled his hair into a haystack, so as to make it impossible for him to maintain his dignity any longer. This is desirable after a certain point, because if Evan really gets to preaching it convulses me to think what might have happened if he had not been so fatally (for family plans) fond of horses, and had actually carried out the idea of his uncle, the bishop, and entered the church!

"What did Neil Gordon have to say of Miss

Steele?" I asked, when his brain circulation was re-established by the impromptu dry shampoo.

"Said she was a regular right-hand man to him, only that he hated to see a pretty woman working so hard and living almost alone in a big city; but that would end some day, for she had, he heard from outside parties, a 'young man,' a doctor up the state somewhere, who was evidently struggling to get a footing, and that he admired her pluck in working meantime and hoarding her savings, for she never spent a penny to go home in the holidays, though she had a home somewhere, but he judged the people were impossible, — a case of a swan in a hen's nest, etc.," all of which, read by the light of Sukey Crandon's confidence, seemed rather strange.

Dear Sukey, how she would really toil and save if the man she loved was struggling! But would she keep him waiting a single moment for "experience" or any other form of pose?

Then I began to wonder if Ivory Steele really loved Dr. Roberts; and if she did not, why was it she allowed the engagement to drag on?

Meanwhile Evan had continued talking in half-sleepy comfort, and I caught up with him as he said, "The Gordons' little home in — Street is charming as long as the windows are closed, but they feel that for the

boy's sake they must go out of town before the very warm weather, and Neil is minded to become my fellow-commuter, if we can find him anything suitable at Oaklands. Now if they once come, ten to one they will never leave, for Janet Gordon and you were born to sympathize, or I'm much mistaken. Think what a metropolis Oaklands may become with the Cortrights, Gordons, The Lady of the Bluffs, the Bradfords, and the Crandon Experiment—" (as he calls the school garden) "all within range!"

"Yes, it would be nice in a way, but I don't want Oaklands ever to be a metropolis," I assented half-heartedly, thinking that the happiness of what had been could hardly be added to.

"In a way—I should say so! Yet it might better the evening trains," quoth the commuting part of Evan, which was usually in abeyance, so suddenly that he laughed at himself; and at the sound a tap came on the door, and Lavinia's voice said, "As I hear that you are not asleep, may I speak to you?"

In the hallway stood Lavinia and Martin, arm in arm, he bearing a tray with a man's and a woman's drink upon it. What were they? Well, there was lemon in both, the juice in mine, in Evan's the long curly peel of the entire fruit! Also I read some pleasant plan in the faces of our hosts.

“Three years ago you two introduced me to your New York,” said Lavinia, smiling, “and gave it to me for my own; now we will show you a bit of ours in return. Can you and the boys be up and dressed at five? There will be coffee and rolls in the dining room. No, not a word more — you must trust us!”

I thought that I saw a glimmer of understanding pass between the two men, but I did not question; surprises are too few after childish days for one to wish to discount them.

* * * * *

XII

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

DAWN was not yet breaking, but its messengers were warning night from its gates when we were called and dressed silently under the spell of the unusual. It was difficult to wake the boys. Ian understood the quickest, and Richard murmured, "Is it Christmas? Is my stocking very full?" and then wanted to snuggle down again, but was revived by his father with a cool face-washing.

Lavinia and Martin were in the dining room when we went down, unconsciously stealing along on tiptoe, the mystery of the hour making us feel like burglars. In the country it seems quite natural at certain seasons to be up before the sun, for the luck of the hunter or fisherman so often depends upon it. But in the city of New York, where the whirl of the pool is at its height when the small hours begin and ebbs as they increase, there is something impressive if not almost ominous in watching day dawn.

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In a quarter of an hour we were in the street. "Shall we ride or walk?" asked Martin; "it is less than ten blocks."

"Walk!" we all agreed, and straightway faced diagonally up town in couples, the boys leading. Though the streets were refreshingly still, there were many people besides ourselves abroad, chiefly church-goers, called out by the early masses of the Easter festival.

At Fourteenth Street and Ninth Avenue we turned northward, and continued onward for a few blocks, when we came to a quadrangle walled in with uniform houses or a low stone fence, and turned westward again through Twentieth Street, the procession, at a sign from Martin, halting at about the middle of the square.

I rubbed my eyes, not sure that I was quite awake. Though the sun had not absolutely risen, it was perfectly light, and all the buildings that stood out distinctly were generally low and ample, as were also the houses on the street. Across the grass-plot, already green, that centred the square, stood a stone church whose square tower was surmounted by a parapet.

Up the street from the west crept the river breath and the river voices, not in the same key

that rises from the water when it flows between tree-clad banks with persuasive murmur, but sharp and insistent—the whistle of tug or pant of engine; and above it all, making a broad line against the sky, the Palisades piled themselves.

Could this be New York, and a stone's throw merely from the rush of life?— nay, rather Oxford or some other old-world town of peace and past. Yes, we were in New York, that city embracing many cities, where alone the cosmopolitan child of many races, many creeds, may find his complement— New York, and this oasis, Chelsea Square, such as faith makes in many a desert, was once, as Martin Cortright told me long ago, Clement Moore's rambling country garden; which he left to be a school garden, as it were, for the culture of godliness.

Hark! what was that? A trumpet call, and repeated again and again! Ian lifted his head, and, following Martin's upraised finger, gazed in wonder. Richard clung to his father for a moment, until he heard whence came the sound. Capped and gowned in the church tower stood the students facing eastward, and from their trumpets came the call sounding the taps of death and greeting life in the sunrise of Easter morning. Then as we stood there, thrilled and awed, the Palestrina hymn to victory broke forth.

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After all, what is time but a mere bird flight, though sometimes the wing of it is swift and sometimes weary? Back in the Christian beginning, on one side of the little hillside city Easter morning dawned, on the other the eaters of the Passover slept heavily. Even so in New York to-day, on one side the triumph of Calvary is sounded, on the other side sleeps the sordid gloom of the Ghetto.

As the people who had gathered silently to listen again vanished, one gray-clad figure caught my eye by her outline and motion, for her features were hidden by a close-meshed brown veil which she took the extra precaution of holding close under her chin. As she crossed the street slantwise, the quicker to gain the avenue unobserved, the wind caught the veil and lifted it for a second. I saw that my impression was right, that the young woman was indeed Ivory Steele!

Straightway I began to puzzle out why she had come. Was it for the novelty of the experience, to gather material for "copy," or was there really something deep within her double nature that called her imperatively out to this silent worship on the pavement? Perhaps the words spoken so carelessly four days before had been merely the language of her errant pose. I like to think this at least, for it is

so easy to criticise and condemn, and so very easy to be mistaken.

On the way homeward nothing escaped Richard's eyes, and he babbled as a child of his years should; but Ian was silent—a startling, almost religious, happiness beaming from his face, and I knew that the music was stored within his heart.

When we gathered at the table for real breakfast, wholesome hunger laying hold upon us all, Lavinia called Ian to her, saying to me by way of explanation, "This is for Ian when he can use it. You have earned it for him with your wallflowers. And when he plays upon it he will always remember this Easter morning." And in the new case she handed Ian was Johann's violin.

XIII

IVORY STEELE

It was evening in early May. The day had brought with it the first fiery herald of the coming summer, who with hot breath waves sounded a long note, so fierce in its suddenness that the echo lingered into the night, and everywhere windows were opened wide.

Ivory Steele sat at the desk in her room. Her head rested on her upraised left hand, while her right arm was stretched across the heap of papers and letters before her with a repellent gesture, as if she were placing a barrier between herself and them.

The room itself, in one of the better class of New York lodging-houses, was also less shabby and more comfortable than the average. In fact it had almost an air of easy luxury. The bed, standing back in an alcove, was invisible when the separating curtain was drawn, and the room had been furnished by its present occupant with a few good rugs, bookshelves, a chest of drawers, centre-table covered with

magazines and knickknacks, a lounge, a couple of comfortable chairs, and an upright piano set aslant in the corner by one window to match the desk before which Ivory sat by the other.

A tall, amber-shaded lamp was on the centre-table, and a smaller one lighted the desk; the high mantel shelf held many articles that indicated a refined taste on the part of either the giver or the buyer, while a low grate still holding a few logs told that on cooler days it had harboured that rarity of city life, a real wood fire!

The window nearest the desk was closed and the shade drawn, but the other was open top and bottom, and in this window half a dozen splendid plants of roses and azaleas filled an artistic wicker stand, the spaces between the pots being filled with tufts of pansies and rosy daisies, all so fresh from their hot-house home that not a leaf had drooped or a petal fallen.

Looking at the papers over which the girl was brooding from the top downward, at a casual glance there seemed to be nothing appalling about them. An envelope addressed in a small and precise female hand of the needle-point-pen school with the capital letters carefully shaded was atop,—this was from her mother. It contained a statement of loneliness, some

advice, and the hint of a coming visit. Below it was a commercial envelope with the picture of a buggy and a business address stamped across the end,—the address was in typewriting. Within was a brief note, a sizable check, and the positive statement that he and “mother” would visit their daughter that week end at the very latest, as there were some matters to be settled that could not be done on paper. Besides these two letters was a card on which was engraved “John Roberts, M.D., Hill Slope,” and the words “You will not refuse flowers” added in firm, decisive writing.

Besides these there were three sets of galley proof to read, one of book reviews and local literary happenings belonging to the *Morning Despatch*, one on Possibilities of City Life, from an educational journal, and one a weekly syndicate scissors-and-paste letter compounded of fashions, theatrical and social news, that would appear in a score of papers in as many minor cities of the West and South. Strange to say, the last was the only signed article of the three; yet its writing gave Ivory neither pleasure nor pride, merely the extra money that she did not really need, except to maintain her determination to prove her power of entire independence, for the money that her father sent her from time to time she deposited in

the bank, where it remained untouched. It saved wearisome argument and, if she thought of it at all, in the end the cumulative result would give added importance to her prowess. But the document among them all that had given her a thrill of pleasure was the request from a conservative magazine for a signed series of comparative articles upon different phases of college life, in which the co-educational, the parallel, and the strictly woman's university were to be contrasted.

This was in the direct line for which she had been working, a chance for individuality and personality, — recognition that made her feel her footing on the ladder.

When she had finished her supplementary college course, nearly a year before, and John Roberts had urged her to marry him without more delay and take up her literary work in her own home, where he promised, so far as man may, that her vocation should have all consideration, added to the sympathy of companionship and the spur of travel, she had hesitated for a moment, and then the errant spirit drowned the appeal of natural affection that still flickered in her heart, though grown faint from persistent suppression; for she had always been fond of John Roberts in a certain way, proud of her engage-

ment to him because, as she was placed, the big, studious fellow had been something to acquire. But he had been too single-hearted and too patient in keeping himself schooled to a promise, when one manly flare of passion might have drawn her nearer than all his faithfulness. As it was, no strong assertion on his part had for a single moment weakened her estimate of self-will. She answered him: "You promised that I should wait until I was fully satisfied that I had made a beginning. I have had training but not experience to prove my independence; wait until I gain a footing."

Now after a year in which she had been left as wholly to her own resources as she could wish, and she felt her foot placed on the symbolic ladder, and not the lower rung at that, she was less satisfied than ever and her world seemed rent by an earthquake.

To-morrow would be her twenty-sixth birthday, and the two home letters were in token of it, as well as the card that had accompanied the plants. Strange it seemed to her, as she thought, that John Roberts had not written at greater length, for though they had not met for many months they had exchanged weekly letters, for it is no exertion for one living in New York to write entertainingly to any one living outside.

During the past year, Mr. and Mrs. Steele had left the Hill Slope and moved to the new house that Ivory so thoroughly detested, in the best residential portion of Seneca, selling the old place, as planned, to Dr. Roberts, who at once established his office there and began his real professional life, not with Ivory as he had expected as a matter of course, but with his sister Editha as head of the home. Now Editha had herself recently become engaged and expected to be married in the autumn, for Dr. Roberts, knowing himself the bitterness of hope deferred, would not allow a postponement for his sake.

All these doings had so wrought upon the homely feelings and common-sense of Mr. and Mrs. Steele that they resolved, much as they disliked leaving and in the face of past experience, to visit Ivory and try to make her view the matter in a new light.

"She has held to her youth and followed her bent to the full and had her choice," said Mr. Steele, walking up and down the sitting-room the evening after he had written the letter and enclosed the check, "and I'm not going to have a man that I can rely upon like John Roberts put upon for any girl living, if she is my own daughter!

"What is she doing there in that all-fired big city all alone, anyway? She doesn't go up to see her

brother Leslie or take any interest in his wife and the children, — not that they seem to care much, more's the pity! For they were brought up strict as we were and go to church and take their children along, and it leaked out to them that last year when the Con-Association met here, half the brethren being at dinner with us, and Brother Coulter sat next Ivy and spoke to her as though she took interest as a matter of course, — what did she do but out with a regular confession of unbelief before them all in that clear 'hear-every-word-distinct' voice of hers, winding up with saying that 'Of course that the Christ legend itself is very beautiful, I do not deny,' as much as to say that she wouldn't be rude and let religion down *too* hard!" And Mr. Steele continued his pacing, which by this time had broken into a trot, while his wife sat with her busy knitting-needles idle for once, occasionally moistening her parched lips, while beads of sweat strung themselves across her forehead.

But lack of opposition did not calm him, as usual, — quite the contrary! During his career upward from the farm life of his boyhood, his success as well as pride lay in overcoming obstacles.

His business had prospered, his boys had turned out creditably, his wife was counted the best housekeeper in Seneca as well as the most active worker in the

religious charities of the place, while Ivory, up to a certain point, had brought him a reflected glow of mental attainment; and should she be allowed to upset everything? "By ginger, no!" It was all very well for new-fangled people to shirk parental duty, but he wasn't one of them!

Whereas the fact was that, from a lack of well-directed, social instinct and expansiveness, neither he nor his wife had been able to follow and guard Ivory at fifteen, and, finding it easier to let her lead (on the ~~4~~-often fatal American plan), took the pleasant ground that girls had their notions, but she would come out all right. So that at twenty-five Ivory had not only altogether escaped from the circle of their, at best, limited personal experience, but her heart, wholly lacking in the influences that at once bind and develop, could no longer be warmed or softened by thoughts of home.

"Leslie says that he and Alice saw her once out at the theatre all alone, and that she flared up when he spoke to her about it, and said it was her 'business' to be there. A pretty business, indeed! I'm going to New York to see just what she's up to, that I am, by ginger! Maybe she's got a new beau, for all we know!"

"Father, don't be coarse," said Mrs. Steele, stung

to reply by the implication; "like as not it is her business to write up plays and say what are fit to see and what not, though I should think the papers would send an older woman. And as to going out alone, Mrs. Colton lived in New York for years; and when Leslie wrote that letter home I asked her, and she says a lady who behaves herself can go out at any time in perfect safety, and I don't suppose you'll go so far as to deny that our daughter is a lady!"

The father stopped short, aghast at this show of spirit in his better half; but he could not know that it was the flash caused by the underlying motherly worry far deeper than his own.

Mr. Steele blew his nose loudly, and, stopping before his wife, added in a plaintive key: "When we moved from the old house you know we left a lot of the things there that she liked best, so as it would seem homelike when she got married, — that old hall clock that was mother's and her big piano, 'cause she said it suited her voice, and the mahogany hall lounge, and all her bedroom fixings. I'm sure I never spared pains nor money for her, and I'd have given John Roberts the house outright, only the wedding not having come off seemed to make it awkward and he wouldn't have it. I'd give her anything

under heaven if she'd only be like other folks' daughters, and not always sit in judgment on us, even though I know we are ignorant beside her. I know it's partly my fault, for I gave her the head and egged her on in her books when she was sixteen, for they seemed a fine thing then ; but it's spending my money and not knowing how, that has helped to build the wall between us —" and the old man, who had been blinking back tears, suddenly dropped to the arm of the chair in which his wife sat and resting his head upon her shoulder cried like a child, while she, all mother again, smoothed his forehead, saying, "There, there, father, don't; we will go to town together and everything may turn out all right; only if I were in your place I wouldn't mention to Ivy about leaving the furniture down at John's house for her, — somehow I think that it might jar and do more harm."

* * * * *

Rising and extinguishing the desk lamp, Ivory held the card with its brief message in her hand, and then walked slowly toward the open window and the plants, fingering them abstractedly.

Why was there no letter? And then it came to her that the morrow would not only be her birthday but the sixth anniversary of her engagement! How

could six years have held so much and yet really leave so little that could be counted as life ?

As she stood in the window, looking at the long row of houses opposite, the rising wind blew in the lace draperies and the centre-lamp gave so wild a flare that she turned it out also, and, without stopping to light one of the gas-jets that was out of range of the draft, returned to the window.

For some reason the darkness was soothing in the extreme, and as she stood resting against the sill her slender fingers twisted convulsively together and a flush, the consciousness of the thoughts that seethed within, crept over her usually colourless cheeks, and up across her forehead to the black depths of her strange lustreless hair.

Was she not wholly glad that Dr. Roberts had not written more fully ? Ah, but what if he intended to surprise her and come himself on her birthday ! The mere thought gave her such a shock that the colour faded from her face more quickly than it had risen ; yet, when she was with Dr. Roberts, in spite of her mental reserve, she had always experienced an enjoyable sense of rest and relaxation.

What was it ? What had wrought the change, the consciousness of which broke startlingly even through her coldness ? She dropped into the nearest chair

and, pressing icy hands to her fevered face, fixed eyes that only looked within and took no count of outside happenings upon the flowers.

As she sat thus, below at the hall door the tired maid, whose only protection from death from overwork was by the roadway of lies, had replied, "No, sir! she's out! She mostly is of evenings—" to a tall, brown-mustached man a little over thirty, who for all his dignity and exact attire the maid set down in her mind as an "out-of-towner," who had asked for Miss Ivory Steele.

Struck by the disappointment written on his face as he turned to go, she almost wished she had taken the trouble that telling the truth involved; for to the housemaid's mind any gentleman who calls may be a possible lover, and very precious and necessary are such, at least in the housemaid's litany.

While she hesitated, however, he had gone down the steps and up the street; so closing the door she examined the card, the duplicate of the one that lay on Ivory's desk above stairs. In her mind the existence of the bit of pasteboard merely complicated matters, so she carefully tore it into fragments and quickly dropped them down the fireless register in the back hall.

* * * * *

There were many circumstances that had made Ivory Steele's a lonely soul in spite of all the opportunities for companionship that her varied life in two college communities had offered. Great souls are often spoken of as being solitary because the vastness of their capacity either for joy or sorrow raises them above and apart from their kind. It is one of the most tempting poses to some temperaments, more particularly of the female than male sex, to seek prominence by forcing this distinction of isolation and seeking to raise themselves above their natural surroundings by a space filled with either the morbid or a species of egotistical mirage.

Ivory would have said at any time of her career that a thirst for knowledge was her only spur, and up to a certain point she believed it; but it was for knowledge, not that she might know, but be known. When only a schoolgirl she had won a prize for English literature, and covered herself with a local cloud of head-turning glory, its effect causing much anxiety to the teacher, — herself a college-bred woman of true experience and ripe culture, — who knew all the signs of talent or ability and of their false alarms that fill the halls of learning.

When Ivory on going home had opened the first volume of the richly bound set of books that were her

reward, she found written therein, together with her name and date, this maxim from Francis Quarles : —

“Desirest thou knowledge ? Know the end of thy desire : is it only to know ? Then it is curiosity : is it because thou may'st be knowne ? Then 'tis vanity : if because thou may'st edifie, it is charity : if because thou may'st be edified, it is wisdom.

“That knowledge turnes to meere excrement, that hath not some heate of wisdom to digest it.”

At college the few girls who had become deeply attached to Ivory she held enthralled, for her power of fascination, of the half-mental, half-magnetic order, was at times almost uncanny, and held sway over women and men alike. But the quality of her pose was a calm, deliberate absence of spontaneity that she called logical behaviour, and it robbed even her wisdom, which could not be denied her, of all leavening and sympathetic warmth. In short, lacking the vital heat to feed both head and heart, she had educated one at the expense of the other, and quickly tired of those among her mates that she had once bound to her.

In beginning her New York life it had been the same. Groups of her college mates had drifted thither, some from Barnwell being established before her coming, — scattered in twos and threes,

some in a little apartment, fed not over-wholesomely, perhaps, from gas-stove or chafing-dish, but still having a home feeling in gathering thus together; others combining their funds to hire one comfortable room, with space to breathe, when living apart would mean almost frigid hall-room dreariness and isolation.

Her brother proffered his home to her, but its remoteness from her office was the excuse for refusal. The honour girl of her Barnwell class, working steadily toward merited success as a portrait painter, offered to share with her a charming apartment studio; but this she also refused, reasoning to herself that she must share not only the rooms but the society of the friend, and she doubted if they really had enough in common to warrant the sacrifice of so much of her liberty and individuality.

Thus it had come about that, though Ivory had many outside invitations from her social friends or those made through the semi-professional life of her responsible position in the editorial office of the *Morning Despatch*, what stood in place of her home life was very solitary, for here again her lonely errant spirit stood in her way. She breakfasted in her room, lunched down town, and dined at any of the many special little foreign restaurants in the neighbourhood, where poor material, disguised by startling

✓ sauces, passed for good cooking. This not only gave the slight Bohemian flavour that people consider a necessary part of gaining experience, but prevented, as she said, her brain force from being sapped by being obliged to converse with the assorted nonentities aggressive or garrulous, at a boarding-house table, and boring one's self by saying "Good morning" and "Good evening" to them. The one thing that stood out in bright relief, surrounded by the sunlight of complete satisfaction, was her work in and for the editorial office of the *Morning Despatch*, and in the very life of the office itself.

Here, while at work, her desire was wholly satisfied. Separated by a glass partition from the merely mechanical stenographers and copyists in the outer office, where the reporters brought their copy or hieroglyphics for translation, she was in touch with it all and yet a being apart. Trusted and consulted beyond the nominal bounds of her position, owing to the peculiar adaptability of her varied education, she shared on equal terms in the companionship of not only Neil Gordon, the literary editor, but also vicariously that of the group of brilliant men of his world that came and went with perfect freedom, treating her not only as an intelligent woman but as

a gentleman always treats a lady, whether he meets her in office or opera box.

To Neil Gordon himself she was, as Evan had said of her, "his right-hand man," combining male accuracy with feminine insight, besides being in a way that he accepted, but did not formulate, decorative and pleasing to the eye. If he thought of the outcome at all, it was that of course the whole business would be short-lived, as is apt to be the case with the professional careers of all attractive women who make the best of their opportunities and do not cherish false standards. Of course Miss Steele would marry the invisible beau from home, and, as lightning seldom strikes twice in the same place, his next secretary would most likely be a red-haired youth with a green necktie and checked trousers, who, having written and read a Latin thesis compounded of quotations at his graduation from one of the minor mongrel colleges on the outskirts of general civilization, would be pushed into the arms of the *Despatch* by influence that could not be refused. It had happened twice before, and history is known to be an incorrigible repeater.

To Ivory Steele the office and its tenants represented life itself. Of the men that came and went, she knew them by name and reputation, but not in

their family relations even remotely. She was aware, of course, that Neil Gordon, her chief, was married and had one son, and that his home was not far away, as he usually went there to lunch. At present, his family being out of town, he had his lunch served in the office by the same caterer whom he had caused to serve her own, ever since the very busy day when she had worked all the afternoon in sopping skirts, taken a cold, and during her absence the substitute had made a glaring error and offended one of their largest advertisers.

She knew merely that Mrs. Gordon existed; she had never met her, and so she was but an intangible rumour, in no way associated with her husband. There was nothing intentional about this on Neil Gordon's part; giving his wife his fullest love and confidence, like many other men he never brought home the mechanical details of the office to fill the scanty leisure that he wished to devote to the home side of life and friends.

While this was the most natural thing in the world, it was a destroyer of values as far as one employee of the office was concerned. Ivory Steele might have chanced to live her life out in an educated community, and yet never have fallen under the charm of perfect culture and gentlemanhood as

illustrated by Neil Gordon and two or three of his contemporaries. The country and often the smaller cities yield the material in the rough, but it is only the great centres of the world that furnish the atmosphere for its development, which having once taken place, the spell is lasting and rises above environment.

No wonder that Ivory, with her heart but half awakened, dreamed of her work and hungered for it. And it was the dread of the severance of it in the coming of the time that was surely ahead of her, when she must either redeem her promise or break it entirely, that haunted her day and night. John Roberts had given her time and to spare, and yet the need of time and again more time had never thrust itself before her as it did this soft May night, when she sat alone in the dark surrounded by the fragrance of the birthday greeting of her patient lover; for whatever Ivory doubted of the here and hereafter, she never questioned his devotion, even though she was often strangely jarred by it.

A month ago she had said to herself, — “By summer I shall perhaps have gained my footing and then I will yield and go home, — not to the new house but to the old one on the Hill Slope —” (For she put it in this way, never even thinking the

technical word "marriage.") "I shall have proved my independence, and have gained experience, and perhaps after all the change and rest will vitalize my knowledge and make it more potent." Even in this half-yielding thought was self, errant self always to the fore.

But now to-night, when the "difficult" magazine had recognized her, was she ready? "No, no, no," she whispered to herself. She could not leave all she had achieved, all she enjoyed, behind; and yet how explain so that plodding John Roberts would understand? for with her woman's intuition she knew a reckoning time for her self-absorption was close, and she felt that a storm-cloud was hovering near, only waiting for her to pass to let its torrents loose upon her.

How could she explain the situation even to herself? For once, she felt that logic had deserted her; and it is a very singular thing that the higher training is so seldom of any practical personal use to its followers in life's crises, to combat either pain of body or spirit, proving that after all the living of life itself is the only true mental or physical discipline.

It was nine o'clock when a second ring at the bell and an inquiry for "Miss Steele" gave the maid an opportunity, as she thought, to make up for her past

error; and she answered with alacrity, thinking to add to her lady's importance, "Yes, sir, she's home, sir, and she's sitting with the elegantest lot of flowers,—they came this afternoon, sir! Who shall I say? Please walk right in the parlour, sir; there's nobody there, and I'll light a gas."

"Tell Miss Steele that Mr. Gordon wishes to speak to her on business, and that he is very sorry to trouble her at so late an hour."

In a moment Ivory appeared, peering into the light cautiously, for the darkness, in which she had been sitting, made her grope. This effect of timidity and the soft, filmy house waist she wore, together with her unusual colour, made her appear like a girl of eighteen, while her strange flash of beauty and attraction struck Gordon as it never had before; as well as the fact of seeing her in a parlour for the first time, albeit a shabby one, gave a more social tinge to their relations. Something new in her face held his eyes as their hands met in greeting, and forgetting to relax his hearty grasp he led rather than followed her to the lounge, where after a few moments of rather aimless hesitating conversation he remembered his errand and explained in a few words that his son was not well and that he could not be at the office before eleven, and must leave soon after

noon the next day. He then gave Ivory the advance sheets of an important new book, upon which he had promised to write an editorial, and asked if she would run it through in the morning and make a synopsis of the contents, that he might take both it and the book with him, and compass it the more intelligently. Besides this request he gave her some important memoranda concerning the work of the next two days, and after apologizing for having disturbed her by calling to talk business out of hours, a circumstance made necessary by the fact that the boarding-house lacked a telephone, he suddenly noticed the fatigue in her eyes and the conversation took a personal turn again; until, at the end of half an hour, he rose to go, saying with one of his charming smiles and his compelling, direct glance that in a man of coarser mould would have degenerated to a stare, — “Mind now, little woman, no overwork for me no matter what the provocation” — thus making an ordinary detail of business seem a personal favour. Nor did he seem conscious that “little woman” is not strictly a technical or business form of address (especially when the woman is not small), or that the conventional shaking of hands at meeting and parting does not require the clasping thereof during the interval.

As the front door closed, Ivory lowered the gas-jet from force of constant example and turning slowly went upstairs, holding the loose sheets vaguely in her hand that burned as her pulse surged and throbbed. The air was blowing keenly now and had lost its sultry quality ; so, lowering the bottom sash, she dropped the curtain, and relighting her lamp prepared to begin work, for since coming to the city she had become more and more the night owl, both from circumstances and inclination ; while on this night, above all others, sleep seemed leagues away, and an incomprehensible dread of the morrow hung over her.

But for once she could not compel her mind to her will : the book merely conveyed words, not ideas, while the card and letters lying on the desk seemed duplicated on every page, blending with the outline of a face. Presently, closing the book impatiently, she again sat gazing before her ; but this time there was no introspection in her face, and her wide eyes had a startled expression as a half-conscious influence developed into a distinct, insistent idea that, having smouldered slowly, a chance cross-current kindled into a sweeping flame that enveloped her from head to foot, reducing brain and body to one level.

Early in life she had, as she thought, gauged her force, then deliberately contracting her heart in its

natural development, compelled it to take second place to head, and thus challenging nature, set forth on her errantry.

But nature, so immovable and retributive when set at naught, so lovable when understood, has a grim sense of humour, and if repulsed in one quarter often enters an unsuspected loophole and throws wide the doors. The portal of her heart that she had so long held forcibly ajar, neither wishing to take the responsibility of letting it swing open nor having the desire to close wholly, now without will or touch from her swung backward wide on its hinges; but the face her awakened vision saw was Neil Gordon's.

* * * * *

Throwing herself face downward on the bed, she muffled her head in the clothes to drown the sound of wild laughter that seized her irresistibly by the throat, and finally, having spent its strength, sank to weak sobbing; while past, present, and future, in a series of moving pictures that constantly collided, racked her brain. Turn where she would, in her present life and work, Neil Gordon was the focus of it all.

To her was come the bitterness of having the glorious moment of love's complete recognition at once the bitterest time of humiliation and com-

plete failure; for with all her headstrongness there was no spark of moral decadence in her make-up. She knew at that crucial moment that the passion was hers alone, and that its object gave her no more thought than her usefulness and his chivalric ideas of woman's proper treatment and comfort implied; nor did she weakly speculate on what time and circumstances might bring about. Beforetime she had held control over herself to carry out an idea; why could she not do it now? She would put the whole thing from her and think only of her work. Then John Roberts's face intervened. For a moment she had forgotten him, and she resented his presence even in shadow; yet he was good and wise, and loved her. Oh, why had she shifted and delayed until to marry him was an impossibility? To "gain experience"! Well, she had gained it in full measure, and anguish was the penalty.

Why had she not a friend either in father, mother, or companion that she dared rely upon for advice? Because of herself — her absorbing thought of self — she could frame no other honest answer.

Springing up, she seized the lamp and, holding it recklessly high above her head, stared at her image in the glass, half expecting to see some hideous thing; but the mirror gave back, line for line, the picture

of a lithe and graceful woman, in the full height of maturing charm, whose flashing eyes and flushed cheeks might indicate joy as well as sorrow.

In her college days she had shocked her conservative classmates by upholding the idea that any one who did not seek escape by suicide from unbearable misery or pain was a craven. But this had been a part of the jargon-errant—a creation of the unworthy pose she had adopted, and neither a principle nor an idea, like so many of the terms current of the advanced life. Now that she faced real trouble, this cowardly method of escape never entered or crossed her mind, thus showing the underlying good of wholesome heritage.

Replacing the lamp, she bathed her face and picked up the sheets she had thrown from her. She had always made rapid decisions—she did so now. To-morrow she would write to Dr. Roberts and ask him to forgive and forget; say that they had grown too far apart, and all the other words in the formulæ of prevarication, that neither conceals nor deceives. Then she would go on indefinitely and live her life; if no one knew, no one could be injured. Since she never had been, and certainly never could be, quite satisfied and wholly happy, she could at least enjoy the undisturbed possession of her own misery. God help her!

But what should she tell her parents? She knew that her father would not allow this breach to be made without argument and going as far to the pith of the matter as possible; and her parents might arrive at any time.

* * * * *

Next morning Ivory Steele appeared at the office of the *Despatch* before the boy had quite finished the daily dusting, and giving as an answer to his eyebrow inquiry of "What's up?" — for she was usually the last one either to reach or leave the office — said that she had some emergency work to oversee, went directly to her desk, and arranging her papers became so absorbed for several hours that she did not hear the door from the outer office open or see the boy coming toward the desk with a card until he touched her arm. Looking up she saw the figure of John Roberts standing in the doorway of the office partition, his soft hat squeezed under his arm and both hands extended.

Taken completely by surprise, she jumped up with a gesture that could easily have been mistaken for gladness, leaving the boy to rescue some "copy" from the scrap basket, which having done he retired to the outside office, reporting to all those interested (and at least all the women were) that Miss Steele's beau had come!

Indeed, when Ivory looked at him his appearance must have surprised her in more ways than one. All his old stiffness and precision of manner had vanished, and he was not only alert but perfectly at his ease, and drew the chair she proffered toward her desk with the air not of asking but commanding her attention in a way wholly foreign to him. What was it that had wrought the change? Travel, professional success? Ah, why had he not been more aggressive from the beginning? Forbearance and patience are well enough in after life; but when a man hesitates to sweep all before him in his wooing, it is as fatal for the woman as for himself.

“Of course you knew that write what you might I should come to-day,” he said, drawing close and fixing his eyes upon hers. “We’ve both had a long siege of it, though for different reasons, and now the time is up. I saw your articles in the *Market Place*, even though you did not send them to me. You have the footing you craved. Come home now and let us work under one roof, and God knows no one will bend all to aid or be more proud of you than I. I’m going abroad in August; we will go together.”

“So soon?” asked Ivory, looking up in alarm which changed to the kittenish air that Sukey Crandon had said was one of her strange transitions to

disarm when situations were becoming strained, or in any way embarrassed her.

“Soon! I cannot even think you use the word in jest. No, Ivory, the time has come when we two must sing the lines of that song with which you used to thrill me,—sing it together,—the last verse that you always avoided, do you remember?

“ ‘Then of what is to be, and of what is done,
Why quierest thou?
The past and the time to be are one,
And both are *now!*’

“It must be *now*, Ivory, this summer—or—never!” He uttered the last word carelessly, as if it contained no significance and was merely the capping of the saying, for no thought of ultimate failure or the shadow of another had ever dawned upon him.

The chance had come for Ivory to speak, and both for his sake and her own when she needed the steadiest nerves, for the first time she found herself tongue-tied in John Roberts’s presence.

At that moment the door flew open and Neil Gordon dashed in, carrying his valise in one hand, in the other his opened watch, while close behind him followed the caterer’s man with the dual luncheon on a tray.

Ivory arose in evident confusion, but before she

could introduce Dr. Roberts he had done it himself and the two men stood shaking hands as one apologized for intruding in office hours, but saying that he had not been able to see Miss Steele at her home, the other making excuses for his hurry, and ending by saying: "Dr. Haweis of North Seneca belongs to my fraternity, and he has often spoken of you, so that you are no stranger to me; and at the same time I must offer you my warmest congratulations and beg that you will let Miss Steele do the honours of host for me, while you remain and eat my luncheon." And casting a bright glance at Ivory, meantime feeling in his own heart that everything was as it should be, and that without effort or embarrassment the lovers could have a well-deserved tête-à-tête, he hurried from the room.

The sight of the two men grasping hands with the best possible mutual understanding made Ivory turn frigid with undefined dread. So Mr. Gordon knew of her engagement; there was another obstacle to be surmounted in its breaking, while as he passed out the door her very life itself seemed to leave her and follow him.

Before Ivory could gather herself together once more, John Roberts had turned and stood looking at her, and her eyes fell. As he gazed and caught the full



“At that moment the door flew open and Neil Gordon dashed in.”



meaning of her expression, the happy light died out of his eyes, an ashen grayness overclouded his rugged full colour, and he reeled slightly as a strong animal does under a physical blow. Yet he was the first to recover, and moved toward the table where the boy had spread the luncheon before leaving. There were many distant eyes upon them, and a man must always keep his self-respect.

Not so with Ivory; her self-possession completely vanished, she did not raise her eyes and merely stretched out a trembling hand for the various dishes he offered her.

Gradually the outer office was emptied by the luncheon hour. As the youngest of the stenographers (who supported her mother and crippled sister, and therefore could not as yet see the way clear to marry her "steady," — a tyro reporter, with barely ten dollars a week) jumped up, pushed back her lopsided pompadour to cool her forehead, and casting a glance toward the couple within, in which good-natured envy and a sense of satisfaction at the spectacle were mingled, drawled to her companion: "Say, ain't they lucky? And ain't the Boss white? He's cleared the track and left them the grub, so the feller is in two lunches, and it'll maybe clear the way for him to blowin' her to a big dinner and the theatre!

Say, let's have bananas; I'm dead tired of pie and frankfurter. When it gets warm weather, I'm gone on fruit!"

The strain of the silence became intense; it seemed as if the very air they breathed was tightened to the snapping point. Then the hysteria working within rose to Ivory's lips in the form of garrulous speech, making her force the topic that she had most cause to dread.

"It is very warm in here, isn't it? Won't you please drop that window? I suppose the season is not so far advanced in Seneca? There used to be crocuses all through the grass on the south lawn—are they there still, or have the field mice eaten them all? Let me think, what were you saying when Mr. Gordon came in? Something tragic about now—and—and—never." The words fell from her lips without effort or conscious meaning, all but the last, and as she said "*Never*," John Roberts's eyes, that had never left her face, compelled her to seriousness and to the present. As she perforce met his eyes once more, whose intelligence was searching as an X-ray, she knew that he read her through and through; and her pent-up misery, let loose by this conviction, turned into wrath with him as the objective.

"Why did you come here—to spy upon me?" she

whispered in wild fury. "Why have you left me to myself so long? Because I wished it? I'm only a woman—how could I tell? You should have prevented it and protected me. Why don't you speak? Why do you sit there like an executioner? Now you know that it is never! never! never! Why don't you go? And when you go back, tell my people that it is settled, all settled—that matter about which they were to come and give me prudent advice—that they are too late, or anything you please so that they do not come—that would be the last str-a-w," and the voice trembled and broke, and the anguished face buried itself between the long white hands whose blue veins now stood out like whip cords until all that remained to John Roberts's vision was the sombre mass of hair that, like a sable cloud, completed for him the eclipse of love and hope.

When she lifted her head a few moments later he had gone, and hastening to the window she saw him striding toward Broadway. Presently he would go home to Seneca to tell them all. *What* would he tell them, she wondered, and how much; but even then when nothing really mattered, at the moment when she would have most completely denied it, the woman in her leaned on the man in him and trusted him more fully than she did herself.

Slowly the outer office filled again, and Ivory compelled herself to work all through the afternoon that seemed eternity. That evening when she entered her room the stand of plants stung her anew, and calling the waiting maid, who had refused her to John Roberts the night previous, she bade her take the plants away, saying they blocked the window and took too much room. Amazed, and scenting some unhappiness that she might have helped bring on, patiently, one by one, the girl, a slavey scarce sixteen, carried the heavy pots down to the area, huddling the pansies and daisies in her apron, that none might see. Then later when it was quite dark, it being her free evening, to and fro she sped to an east-side tenement, where, with these rejected offerings of love, she made a garden on the high-up fire-escape, for her consumptive sister to feast her eyes upon. Love may go astray, but it is never wholly lost or wasted.

XIV

THE MEETING OF THE WAYS

(*Morning*)

May 16th: Saturday. Yesterday an easterly storm raged, dashing cold water slantwise in the joyous face of May, until she veiled her eyes and hid trembling in the drooping leafage; while the determined wind swept the sky free of its winged flowers, — the journeying warblers, — until they flew to shelter in the pines, the bushes in the garden and along the lane, and even in the honeysuckles on the porch. Then the wind itself dropped to cover, bearing with it from the north a vagrant ice spirit, who, making its escape again at dawn to-day, sped through the garden in its course until the breath of cowslips and lilies-of-the-valley chilled on their lips, and the succulent dielytra was garlanded with frozen hearts, while the brown thrasher left his matins unsung.

But with the sun out came the warblers trooping everywhere, all seeking food. Some scanning the pine branches with their curious backward flit, some searching the gravel walks and grass edges for ants,

—all uttering their characteristic insect notes, above which the call of the whitethroat, “Here I — am again — am again — am again!” — and the chickadees’ descending spring call were distinct. Who can stay indoors on Warbler Day? (For there comes one day like this in every season if only our eyes are open.) No one, except perhaps the unfortunate three old maids of Lee, one of whom was deaf, the other lame, and the third blind and couldn’t see! Yet come to think of it, I believe the three poor old dears would have been the very last to stay indoors after all, so brave is the thinking half of the world becoming under trial, so used to picking up the burden and carrying it instead of being swept away by it, while the knowledge and growing love of the great Heart of Nature itself is a mighty factor in this leavening. I am quite sure that the deaf old maid would have pushed her lame sister out in a wheel-chair to see the warblers, leading the blind one behind. Then the deaf one would tell the blind one what they looked like, and the lame one would look up their names in the bird book and tell the deaf one what their songs sounded like, and behold the height of cooperative instruction and a pleasant morning for all — not but what the lame one had rather the best of it, some *one* generally does!

Meanwhile the warblers plumed, fed, and plumed again, and certainly conversed in undertone in addition to what their more public call notes might divulge. Some are summer residents, others merely *en route*; I wonder what they think of each other, if many families are chancing to travel together, or if they are total strangers save that their ways in the great migration chance to cross and their one point of common sympathy is—food.

How much we all are like migrating birds appealed to me an hour later when I drove one of father's gray ponies down the hill road to the village. The grays, be it said, have been retired from night work and long journeys, in general, to be collectively that comfortable member of an animal-loving family known as "the general useful" horse. This means that check-reins and blinkers are but memories; they are seldom tied when standing, being on their honour; their hours of work are few, and of resting many; that they enjoy a large measure of the society of the family, also they may go frequently to pasture and eat of their own choice and indulge in fresh grass, unchidden, even if their stomachs do grow portly as a result.

As I neared the post-office I saw Lavinia Cortright coming down the village street, while at the

same time Mrs. Jenks-Smith's victoria with Jane Crandon in it drove up from the opposite direction and halted under the great sugar-maple opposite the railway station. As I looked up from scanning my marketing list, a distant buggy coming along the north turnpike seemed to have a vaguely familiar aspect, and when I came out of the drug store, after leaving an order for father's surgery, the vehicle had passed the door, and to my surprise I found that the occupants were none other than Sylvia and Horace Bradford, little Anne perched on a three-legged stool, and wearing an odd, quilted pink sunbonnet of her grandmother's fashioning, being tucked in between. They came to a halt at the butcher's shop, which already contained Lavinia Cortright, who was waiting, with rather a severe expression upon her aristocratic features, while the Vanderveers' butler gave his order, the length and breadth of which seemed likely to despoil the shop of anything desirable, ending with the withering command, "H'and the missus wishes h'all your sweetbreads and h'all your kidneys 'eld for 'er h'all the season!"

Whereupon the proprietor booked the order with alacrity; but if any individual of the summer colony at the Bluffs thinks to interfere with what an Oakland native tradesman considers due to "residents"

and a certain pride and neighbourly feeling for their comfort, they are likely to be disappointed.

Before Mrs. Cortright and I had more than exchanged greetings and expressed mutual surprise at seeing Horace in the neighbourhood, the 10.15 train had arrived and, departing, deposited Mrs. Jenks-Smith herself, whose coachman, evidently under compelling directions, whipped up the stately, heavily trapped show horses until their harness rattled like castanets as she hailed us with her ruffled, crape-trimmed parasol, nearly knocking my hat off as the victoria made a sweeping circle and stopped exactly in front of the shop door. Horace Bradford's horse, the same benevolent animal that he had driven to the Latham house the day of the lawn party three years before to the derision of Parker, Potts, and Perkins, having the usual dislike for close approaches of his independent race, being left in the outer circle.

Then for a few moments the hubbub of voices rivalled that in an opera box or afternoon tea in Whirlpool circles. The meat shop, the source of provisions, became a gossiping centre and the meeting of many ways for us, even as the ant-filled path and the tree-trunk storehouses were gathering places for the feathered migrants.

By judicious filling out of broken sentences I

gathered that Horace, having a week's liberty between spring examinations, had the day before brought his wife and baby and established them with his mother at Pine Ridge, where his own presence was necessary to superintend certain repairs and expansive improvements. For Horace has come to feel that, whereas farming in southern New England may not be of sufficient importance as a separate occupation, yet given the plant and the early knowledge that is essential, farmers to a certain degree having to be born, it is the one satisfactory reflex amusement and brain clarifier for a literary man. I also learned that the trio were proposing "if convenient" to lunch with us and take me back to Pine Ridge for the night. The first part of the proposition I hailed with joy, the second my Familiar Spirit consigned to a convenient but secret place where it buries nearly all invitations to sleep from home, sometimes pulling a plausible excuse from one of its seven-league boots or wishing cap (for my Familiar is as well endowed as Puck himself), and at others utterly deserting me and forcing me to state the cold truth, by way of discipline.

Lavinia Cortright, after telling Horace that he was the very man they most wished to consult both upon things literary and material, begged him to stop at

“Greenwich Inn” for afternoon tea on the way home to the Ridge, and gave the added information, which was also news to me, that she had written to Ivory Steele asking her to come to them for Sunday and was expecting her in time for luncheon. As Ivory had known both Sylvia and Horace at Rockcliffe, Lavinia proposed to include the Bradford Farm in their Sunday afternoon drive. Sylvia was very eager at the idea of meeting her classmate, and said that Ivory had always fascinated her in a great degree; and as she had not seen Ivory since her own marriage she was very anxious to know how she had developed, and if she had succeeded as a writer, adding: “I suppose you know that her long engagement to Dr. Roberts has been broken? but I feared that it would happen because there can neither be two heads in one house nor two chief purposes in the same life. I am deeply sorry, for Dr. Roberts is such an unusual man — almost too unselfish. I only hope that her talent is great enough to justify her, if it is possible, in what Horace calls being a woman errant!” And Sylvia leaned forward with such a pretty ladylike air of matronly, yet logical, content to rearrange little Anne, who had not only slipped off the stool, but suffered a total eclipse by turning her head into the crown of her sunbonnet.

At this point Mr. Fanton, the butcher, feeling that if his shop and steps were the scene of so much local sociability he should at least take part in the entertaining, wiped his hands with great ceremony and emerged, his honest, ruddy face beaming, his beautifully even third cutting of teeth glistening, and extended his hand to Horace, who was still standing by the buggy, saying: "Well now, Horace, I reckon I'm putty nigh as glad to see you as you must be to see yer folks. I haven't had the pleasure of meetin' your wife since she was Miss Latham, and I served her folks to our mutool satisfaction be it said — our mutool satisfaction! And so this is the little gal? Somehow we'd figgered she was older, or Ma wouldn't hev fetched them nut-cakes up to the Ridge for her yisterday — seed cookies bein' more suitable — when the mail carrier allowed she was expected before night by the postal he fetched up, — and the way Mis' Bradford was hustlin' around! Called Anne, is she, after Grandma? Well, I want ter know! Come to look at her, I do think in her colourin' she favours our family. You see, Mis'is Horace, I'm second cousin to Grandma Bradford, and blood's a deal thicker'n water!"

"Did your wife make those delicious nut-cakes that we had for supper? Mrs. Bradford said they

were a specialty of 'Cousin Esther's,' but I did not hear any other name, and it seemed as if half of the township were relations who had sent something for our welcoming supper," and Sylvia stretched out her slim, well-gloved hand to Mr. Fanton. He grasped it heartily, saying: "I want ter know! but that's what everybody should ha' done. 'Tisn't every woman in the country has raised a son into a full-blowed professor; yes, by jinks, and had him come back, wife and family, and stick right by her, too! The next best was Mrs. Peck's son, Jeremiah, who started off well, but ended backside foremost. He invented an onion weeder, and while he was a-waitin' for the patent, they mortgaged the farm to put up a factory to make 'em in! But, great snakes! they couldn't get a patent,—the contraption had been done before! So now Jerry, he's turned the factory into a two-story fowl house,—poultry on the ground floor, pigeons up top, and hogs in the cellar,—to work that mortgage off agin!

"I suppose you've heard old Deacon Hill's dropped off,—didn't more'n outlive his third honeymoon—so that Sereta Wells, that was, is a blooming widder. They *do say* howsomever she somehow managed to set his chair in a judicious draft; be that

as it may, she owns the farm square enough and can afford to marry now to please herself."

"Mr. Fanton! Mr. Fanton!" called Lavinia Cortright's silvery voice from inside the shop. "I'm very sorry to interrupt you, but I must leave my order. You see I'm expecting company for luncheon — company from New York," she added, having after a few weeks' experience learned how the native must be handled. "I suppose after the standing order you have received it is useless for me to ask for a set of sweetbreads?" she added plaintively.

"Plenty of use, marm, — plenty of use, — two sets if you like. Yes? And you'll take 'em with you? That's clever now, for my first delivery's gone out on a long route. I'll roll 'em in waxed paper so's they won't sweat through, and like as not Mrs. Smith outside'll give you a lift home. Yes, marm, Vanderveer's folks kin leave standin' orders, and I can let 'em stand or sit as they please! But friends and neighbours come first, which it seems that you bein' a sort of adopted aunt of Horace Bradford's wife and—" (lowering his voice to a fat whisper) "standin' by her three years ago when that fool mother of hers got divorced and turned her back, you come further in than that, clear into the kin belt!"

I dared not look at his last victim to see how she was bearing up, for clearly this was Mr. Fanton's day, and he meant to make the most of it, anything like aggression being far from his thoughts. Simply he was pleased with himself, the world in general, and his own clan in particular, and show it he must.

Sylvia was quite unruffled and had turned to speak to Mrs. Jenks-Smith while the baby was being handed about, finally landing in Jane Crandon's lap, where she sat chuckling in high glee, making grabs at the elaborate jet buttons of the elder woman's wrap, much to her amusement.

There was nothing either sensational or condescending about Sylvia's democratic attitude toward life in general or her husband's relatives in particular. They had entered her life when every illusion and hope of youth seemed slipping from her, and she had found them true, and her democracy therefore was the sterling article born of the experience of perfect content, lived none the less intelligently because it led her in simple ways among simple-minded people. If the thought that the second cousin of her daughter's grandmother was the village butcher lodged in her mind at all, it was to hope that little Anne's blue eyes would be as clear and

her cheeks as rosy and unwrinkled at seventy as his were.

Presently Lavinia Cortright came out with a very dainty bundle, considering its contents, and cherry-red cheeks, but I discounted the suggestion that Mrs. Jenks-Smith might take her home, by making room for her in the stanhope beside me. Horace led his horse to a hitching-post, as he had some lengthy errands, and at a signal from Mrs. Jenks-Smith I drove up parallel with her. Jane Crandon was very simply dressed, and therefore probably according to her own taste, in a dark blue suit with hat to match the short coat opening over a daintily embroidered white shirt-waist. She had good hair, eyes, and teeth, but her expression was rather sombre,—I thought perhaps it might be, however, in contrast to her companion's conspicuous vivacity.

"To see you all here," said the elder woman, spreading her arms wide enough to enclose space, "is enough to make one think the season's opened, and so it has for me. Jane and I are going to have our first spree; the other girls are coming down from Bridgeton by trolley, to spend Sunday with us, and after luncheon we are all going up to the Bacon farm to have a look about, and see to the repairs and rigging up for the garden school. I'm going to have

out the little 'bus, and I want you and Evan to come with us and give hints. It's right on the cross-road to Pine Ridge, too, so perhaps the Bradfords would look in on their way home. There they are now!" and as she pointed with her parasol, the sombre expression on Jane's face gave place to one of enthusiastic joy, and she started forward as if to spring from the carriage and run to meet them, then checked herself with an effort.

"Go right ahead and meet the girls, if you want to," said the good-natured Lady of the Bluffs. Jane needed no second bidding, and as the three paused a moment before coming toward us, arm in arm, she said hurriedly: "I've told Jane to call me Aunt Hattie. I like to hear the name Hattie—Jenks-Smith always used it, and, just think, not a soul has spoken it since! How do I like Jane? She suits me exactly, though I'm not at all sure but what, as far as she's concerned, she'd rather pitch in and cook and be with her sisters. I never imagined that there could be any one who must be working at something all the time! I thought I knew what it was to be on the go, and so I do for pleasure; but she seems to find something to do every blessed minute in my very house, in spite of all the help I keep.

“The other night—the first after we came up—I had a raging headache, and I rang for a cup of tea. When I succeeded in finding the single maid who was at home,—yes, my dear,” (to Lavinia) “you will soon find city rules don’t hold here,—she said the fire had gone out, and there was no alcohol to light the tea-urn. Just as I was giving up any hope of comfort, in slips Jane, as natural as possible, with a little tray in her hand, and a cup of tea made just to the queen’s taste,—thin slice of lemon and all. It seems she boiled the water over the alcohol lamp I use for my hair curlers,—of course the maid never thought of *that*. After I had the tea, my dear, she bathed my head and wrapped up my feet in flannel, and then sat down by me and held my hands—which were icy—in hers until they grew warm. Nobody ever held my hands to warm them when I had a headache but Jenks-Smith—once. It was when we went to Italy on our wedding trip and overdid those damp ruins, and he was afraid that I was going to have Roman Catholic fever—yes, my dear, lots of Americans got it in Italy that year, and if they did pull through they’ve never been quite the same. It’s in the air, I suppose, through so many bodies of saints and martyrs and things being buried below.

“Well, anyhow, I went to sleep that night just like a baby; my, but how comfortable and strange I felt, knowing there was somebody in the next room that had feelings! Yes, I’ve fitted up Jenks-Smith’s bed and dressing room for her, so she can have a place to go if she’s tired and wants to be rid of me, and she can get to it by either the front or back stairs.

“Already I wish she were my daughter, but then that’s silly, for like as not she’d want to leave me for good, then. I guess I’m much more likely to keep her the way things go nowadays because she belonged to somebody else; though I must say the way those girls have hung together and to that aggravating father of theirs that looks as if he were made of the odds and ends of the lightning-rods and patent corkscrews he used to sell, passes me. Didn’t you know that? Why, yes, he was a travelling man — Jenks-Smith knew him back in the sixties, was on the same train playing poker in with him the time of the smash-up, and was just suspecting there were two more aces round than were quite healthy, when the crash came! Crandon was so scared (J.-S. always said it was on the double count) that he got religion, while Jenks-Smith, who only had his elbow twisted, took damages from the company!”

As the Crandon girls joined us and I presented Sukey and Lois to Lavinia Cortright, I thought I had never seen a more cheerful, light-hearted trio. Lois in fact quite surprised me. I had only met her once before, and that was after dark in the Bridgeton station. The tallest of the three, unlike her sisters she had very light blond hair and dark brown eyes and lashes. Though she talked less than Sukey, she evidently had an alert intelligence, and at a casual glance I should have picked her out as being the most purely intellectual of the three in spite of the fact of her few advantages and immaturity. Sukey kissed me most affectionately, giving my arm a squeeze and whispering in my ear as she did so, "Ah, Cousin Barbara, isn't everything almost too good to be true? and if it hadn't been for that afternoon under the eaves with you, after Mrs. Blair's rebuff, I'm sure I should never have dared tell my plan to any one." Then the Crandons squeezed into the victoria, and, the marketing being left to follow in the depot wagon with some trunks, the equipage proceeded up hill by the front road, while I took the shorter, more picturesque, if less smooth, back way, dropping my companion at her gate.

As I drew up Martin appeared — the one-time pre-

cise man of frock-coats and white-sprigged waistcoats — clad in knickerbockers, an outing shirt, leather belt, soft loose necktie, and a worse-for-wear hat stuck on the back of his head to give freedom to a forehead whereon at intervals sweat and earth in equal proportions made mud polka-dots. To-day the book-worm and author were hiding under the visible alias "gardener," and for some cause he seemed as agitated as Mr. Sparrowgrass himself when he discovered that the result of increasing his wooden drain an inch to the foot would enable him to drive a load of hay in at the lower end, which was not for what the drain was constructed.

Helping his wife carefully down, his first words were, "An extraordinary thing, my dear, very extraordinary. You know those French beans of which you were so fond, that I planted only a week ago? Well, they have all come up, but most strangely, throwing up the ground above them into sort of earthworks, the beans themselves rising in mid air, as it were, on long necks. I shall make a note of this and photograph them, for neither the lettuce, spinach, nor radishes did anything of this sort!"

"Have you told any one of your discovery?" asked Lavinia.

"No, my dear, I wished you to have that pleas-

ure," he said, taking the hand that she laid on his arm.

"Then be very sure that you do not," she said, trying to keep her face, into which he was looking earnestly, from rippling into laughter, and not succeeding.

"Why, my dear Lavinia, I believe that you are laughing at me. Do not shut me out of the joke. Am I mistaken in my hypothesis?"

Then Lavinia laughed all over as I had never seen her do before, and leading her amazed spouse in at the gate said, "You thought it strange the other day that I did not remember the date of some early Manhattan Indian skirmish which you could not positively prove ever occurred, and gave me a lecture on the importance of accuracy upon one's reputation. Now I am going to get out my girlhood's 'How Plants Grow' and read you a lesson on *beans*, for one and the same reason!"

All of which goes to prove the unshakable theory that a man may be a scholar and an author and yet not even know beans! But this is a painfully frivolous remark and should not remain in my Wonder Book, save that my ink-erasing rubber is petrified, as such utensils are apt to be after the winter's cold, and it is against my rule to rip or tear out pages.

* * * * *

After I had been at home half an hour and expanded the luncheon to our needs, Horace and Sylvia came; and Evan, as usual, having brought work home for Saturday, our husbands, Sylvia's and mine, had their first real opportunity to become acquainted on the sound basis of home personality, rather than in the artificial atmosphere that prevails when men meet in the house of a third person in no matter how informal a way. I sincerely wish that Horace and Evan may become not merely acquaintances but friends, yet they are both so typical of their separate nationalities, and so aggressively patriotic, each in his own way, that I am sometimes doubtful of the outcome. Still, after all, it is their loyalty to home life that should bind them.

— Home love is individualized patriotism, and it is only through having a home to love that the immigrant of any grade, whether he comes in a cattle boat or in a captain's deck suite, can be expected to yield real allegiance to an alien land. Therefore, every cult or culture that belittles the home, and places it second to any other ambition, is the sower of anarchy, be it disguised ever so cleverly in all the garb of advanced thought.

On my return the warblers had gone from the paths again, but faint murmurs told me that they

were resting in seclusion, for the sun had come out as if nothing unusual had occurred the past night. Some of the birds would undoubtedly go on under cover of darkness, some stay a few days, and others for the summer, their ways parting at random as they had crossed much as the ways of the three women — Sylvia Bradford, Ivory Steele, and Sukey Crandon — had divided, and now again, this spring day, an unrelated force brought them to meet again at Oaklands, where they had never before been together.

Sylvia and I spent the interval before luncheon in a good old-fashioned sort of talk, — the kind that women enjoy so keenly, and yet that the most dearly beloved of men would consider disjointed and aimless.

When I first met Sylvia Latham at Lavinia Dor- man's, nearly four years ago, before either of them dreamed of matrimony, she had many attractions both of heart and head, but seemed infinitely younger than myself; now, though of course the years have not gone backward, the gap between us has closed. For the daily contact with a man of the force and clear intellect of Horace Bradford has freed her from both crudities and timidities, and developed her in every way, — body, mind, and soul, — showing that

to live life is education, not to sit apart in pharisaical seclusion and inspect it through a telescope that is too often found to have distorted the vision when the gazer finally chances to encounter the actual at short range.

The boys immediately captured little Anne, or rather she captured them, with her fearless and fascinating two-years-and-a-half-old ladyhood. Hearing a shouting, mingled with barking and yelping of dogs, Sylvia rushed to the front porch, fearful of consequences, to see Ian crawling on the grass, with Anne riding gleefully on his back, pounding his ribs lustily with her red-shod heels whenever he halted, chirping to Richard, whom she was driving with the bridle and reins of the goat harness, whose day is not yet done, to make him prance, while the dogs sported about regarding the matter as a great joke; that is, all but The Orphan, Timothy Saunders's old sheep dog, who, gray with age and wisdom, walked close beside the baby, with a knowing cock in the one eye that could be seen through his wool, and seemed to insure protection to his charge.

The effect of the budding influence of the "spell womanly" upon my boys was no more mysterious than the effect that the spell of youth has over the so-called dumb animals. Would Lark, the oldest

hound, allow a grown-up to drive him by his sensitive ears? or The Orphan permit other than baby hands to tug and tangle themselves in his shaggy coat, and feel repaid to the point of wagging his tail-stump into a state of delirium by a very hard pat, undistinguishable from a blow, on the nose? Heresy though it may be to say it, there are many far blinder guides than primitive instinct.

XV

THE MEETING OF THE WAYS

(Two Afternoons)

FATHER happily joined us at luncheon, so that our party was complete. He had been up at the north woods above the charcoal camp all the morning, and was so completely exhausted that I urged him to have his meal in the study; but he said that a change of scene from the squalor he had just left would be the most complete rest. It worries me to have him keep up this scattered hill practice at his age, yet it is there that the misery of the country-side seems to focus.

After the real business of luncheon was over, the boys went out again with the Princess Pond Lily, as Richard dubbed little Anne, after the wonderful fairy-story lady of golden hair and pearly skin who harnessed swallows to her chariot and hung fireflies in her palace for electric lights.

Then, under the influence of the calm of good coffee, rightly cured cigars, and the delicious odours that the warm sun had drawn up from the ground

chilled by last night's frost, the men talked, and Sylvia and I lingered in the bay-window and listened. There is always something to be learned by listening when men talk, even though one does not know it until afterward, for they often vitalize the thoughts that, lying dormant, we do not realize.

Father was much interested in hearing that Bradford had been chosen one of the editors of a new collection of the English poets. This he thinks much needed, now that the Bell edition is so far from being complete as well as inadequate.

I squeezed Sylvia's hand when I heard this, for I knew that it was a subject they could share in common and a case where she could be of real help; for the first winter of their marriage she had learned stenography and typewriting as a surprise, that she might copy Horace's notes and thus keep abreast not only of his work but of general trends. Of course, with Anne's fingers plucking at the mesh of life, there will be less time, but what there is will have new motive lent it.

Bradford was also keen to hear of the progress made in the argumentative correspondence between Professor Truesdale, Professor Nordschau, and father, from which the latter is gleaning data for his book on *The Effect of Education upon Woman*, which he

would have called "Sex and Education" if it had not conflicted with the title a brother physician, some thirty years ago, gave his volume written from a different viewpoint; which reminds me that I am not as faithful as Sylvia, and am behind in the copying and arranging of these letters in sequence, which must be remedied next week.

Ah, me! I wonder why there must be anything else to do or think of but to love and enjoy life in spring, because no sooner is everything here in the way of courting, feather, and bloom, than whisk! and they are off again, and it is moulting time and the flower a seed pod. So often, if you don't "go forth for to see," it's now or never, while written words will keep for stormy days. Then, too, I find myself clinging to the sunny side of my years, as I do to the spring days, with true feminine pertinacity, and hoping when I am at last forced to go to seed it may be as a cheerful bitter-sweet vine that clings to the sturdy pointed cedar and holds its colour quite through winter.

"I often doubt if it is possible to get at the root of the education and sex matter either by analogy, inference, or on the evidence of tabulated facts," I heard father's voice say, as my mind seemed to float back from the midday dream where it had gone

with Sylvia across the garden to the wild walk to listen to jack-in-the-pulpit sermons.

“The whole question seems to me to be so much a matter of individual temperament. Taking all conditions in consideration, there is an attitude, a spirit that crops up frequently and almost defies comprehension. Nordschau calls it positive negation,—the Spirit of Denial that was impersonated by Mephistopheles in the Faust legend. I met this spirit in one of its lowest forms to-day!” I became all attention, for I knew by the expression of father’s face when he returned that he had been living another chapter of the book that lies hidden in the heart of every good physician, sometimes writ in its very blood.

“The charcoal camp is, at best, a rough community, and the existence a vagabond life of exposure, uncertain profits, and away from the eye of the law. Men and women appear there and disappear, leaving no trace, and sometimes the half-dozen tumble-down huts on the wood edges are filled, and sometimes quite empty. There are few marriage ties among those that flock here; the women are merely ‘house-keepers’ by courtesy, who constantly shift and change.

“Those who have a mind to study the sordid side of realism need not seek France and Zola’s inter-

pretation; many a dark volume lies hidden among the back-country by-ways where the passing eye sees only the graceful droop of the wild grape along the wall, or the waving ferns in the wood, and the mysterious deserted house is only considered as a 'good bit to photograph.'

"This morning I received a telephone from the Pine Ridge store that Joe Hanks's 'housekeeper' was dying, and that he was 'crazy sick' himself and insisted that I should come to her. Questioning brought out the fact that she had been caught in the storm on the way back from Bridgeton two days ago and so thoroughly soaked that the 'water had gone to her lungs.' 'Alco-pneumonia,' I thought, for it is usually that with the hard-drinking saw-mill or charcoal folk, be it spring, summer, autumn, or winter; so I put some necessities into my satchel and started forth.

"I remembered Hanks as a little, dried-up man, whose broken leg I had set two years before at the camp; but I did not know his 'housekeeper' or his present habitation; so instead of beating about the meandering lanes and pent-roads, I stopped at the Ridge store to get my bearings.

"'He lives in the old sloped-roof house in that up-hill pasture that was Peterson's sheep farm until

the dago run him clean out,' said the proprietor, coming out and leaning on a wheel meanwhile. 'The woman's seen better days, they claim. Andy Tolland's wife declares she went to school with her once when she was a kid in York state, but you couldn't think it now, and I don't credit it! Lord, she's no beauty! The way it come about was this. Day before yesterday Hanks and she drove in a load of charcoal to Bridgeton — it couldn't hev been later'n five A.M. when they passed here, which got 'em inter town well before noon. It seems, so I heard from third parties, that as soon as he teched money he began to drink, and they quarrelled over a brier pipe they smoked between 'em. She, bein' the smartest and always bound to take the lead, got mad, sold out the rest of the load, and proceeded to drive the team home, leaving Hanks to walk!

“‘Knowing his weak side and havin' some method in her ways, she stopped at every particular saloon between here and Bridgeton and at each left five cents for a glass of beer for Hanks when he hove along, for she knew mighty well which track he'd take. It came on to rain and she must hev been like a drowned rat, and full of liquor besides when she turned in after letting the old hosses go to pasture, for they say that when Hanks found her this

mornin' she was still lyin' with the wet shawl hugged around her. What became o' Hanks? Oh, he followed the road home, stopping at all the saloons as she knew he'd do. But when he found what she'd done, and that he couldn't get the money — only the beer — his feelings was wounded, — Hanks allers had queer on-edge feelings for a chap of his sort — and what does he do but take the beer and going to the door pour it out, as grand as you please!

“‘This he done at every saloon, till by the time he'd passed the last one he got discouraged and turned into the Meekers' cow barn and went to sleep. Yisterday he sulked about and did some chores at Meeker's fer his board, and when he fetched up home this mornin' he found the old woman about done fer!’

“I went on as directed, and when I neared the dismal, old, abandoned house, that looked all the more outcast and wicked for the beauty of the blooming shrubs that straggled around it, I saw a few men grouped awkwardly by the fence, while a woman came from inside and another woman, rather an intelligent, slim young thing, was trying to pacify a small man who, with a gingham apron tied about his waist, as if he had been preparing some food, was rocking to and fro and crying in the most disgusting state of alcoholic misery.

“Inside I found the form of what was once a woman lying on a bare mattress, covered by a tattered quilt, while a second woman was sitting by talking to her in a purposeless manner and striving to force some tea between her lips. The figure on the bed must have been about fifty; the gray hair cut short spoke possibly of some penal institution; the face that carried no meaning to me was bloated almost to shapelessness, and the black eyes that every now and then rolled open were buried in deep wrinkles. I could do nothing but administer a sedative; the end was too near, and while I watched it came. The case was undoubtedly one of alcoholism and pneumonia, but the reputation of the people and their surroundings made the formality of an inquest both necessary and wise.

“As I withdrew to the window to make some entries in my note-book, Hanks, followed by a couple of friends, slouched in, now at least partly sober, and looked about in a dazed sort of way.

“‘What was the woman’s name?’ I asked of any one who might choose to answer. ‘Why, Mrs. Hanks, for sure,’ said the woman who held the tea-cup.

“‘Was she your wife?’ I asked, fixing my eyes on the trembling Hanks.

“‘No — God — no! I couldn’t ha’ dared said *marry* to her — she war born a lady — she war —’ and he began to cry again.

“‘Her own name before was Morton — Alice Morton,’ chirped up the woman with the tea-cup, who seemed bound to give information. ‘A letter came here onct to that name a couple o’ years ago, and she claimed it, though by the way it was marked up she must ha’ jogged about a sight and I reckon it had travelled about round the airth, after her.’

“For a moment my brain wrestled vainly with memory and a name, and presently a picture painted itself thereupon, clearly defined. It was thirty-five years ago on a bright June day; the scene was in the high school of a country town in New York state. The graduating class, all dressed in white, were waiting in line to receive the diplomas that were their permits to teach, while the daughter of a prosperous merchant of the town recited a farewell poem, her black eyes flashing and her clear-cut profile cast in relief by the dark door against which it was outlined.

“Then a young physician, who was visiting this his wife’s native town, gave the diplomas and with them the easily spoken words of prophecy and hope. The girl who gave the poem was called Alice Mor-

ton, and I was the young physician. For a moment, as this memory flashed, I was as one stricken dumb. Then I looked at the features, now sharpened by death, and I caught a certain outline.

“‘Alice Morton?’ I repeated.

“‘No, not that name — she never was called that,’ broke in Hanks, a scared light in his eyes and sickly pallor spreading over his unshaven cheeks. ‘I really disremember how she was called — yes, I do — but she was a lady!’ and he relapsed into total maudlin imbecility. Thus ended the second meeting of the ways.

“I left, and the authorities must give in burial what name they choose to Joe Hanks’s ‘housekeeper.’ I could prove nothing had I so wished.”

“The moral of this being what?” asked Evan, whose directness does not enter into deductive subtleties.

“That there are times when the negative spirit in women so discounts birth and training that no lesson can be deduced. Therefore we can only judge of errant women as individuals, occasionally as types, but never as a whole,” replied father, rising and walking up and down rapidly as he puffed vigorously at his cigar.

* * * * *

At half-past two the boys came running in to say that Mrs. Jenks-Smith’s ‘bus was turning in the gate,

and we prepared to separate, the Bradfords going directly to the Ridge, while we stopped at the Bacon farm.

It is really a very pretty old place of immense possibilities, if it is but let alone; and a heart of stone must have melted before Sukey Crandon's enthusiasm as, entering the doorway first, I following, while her host had gone round the back way to interview Collins and his wife, who were now in possession, she threw her arms around my neck and whispered, "This is the house where my own mother was born! Please pinch me to see if I'm awake!"

"Blue and white papers inside and white paint and green blinds outside; nothing else, please," was Sukey's answer to Mrs. Jenks-Smith's request for a list of necessary repairs. The good soul was simply aching to send up Marcotti to "do up" the whole house in the modern gorgeousness that is called "cottage simplicity," of the order of stage scenery.

"Paint and varnish and muslin and a little chintz will do so much, as soon as Lois and I can get to work," explained Sukey to her somewhat disappointed patron; "the furniture is quite sound, and I've saved almost a hundred dollars this last year, so that I can buy a pretty blue-and-white dinner set besides!"

Mrs. Jenks-Smith feigned astonishment admirably at the magnitude of the sum, and in her heart felt ashamed to realize that she had the day before paid an equal amount for the ruffled, black-lace parasol that she was trailing behind her, its fairy meshes already full of dirt and straws.

"Have you chanced to see Ivory Steele?" I asked Sukey as we strolled through the garden together to measure off the "lesson plots," while Jane, Lois, and Mrs. Jenks-Smith were still discussing the proposed dining room.

"Yes, Mrs. Cortright stopped with her on the way from the station to invite me to supper there to-night. Ivory has hardly changed a particle, except that she looks a trifle pale and tired, perhaps. She was so alert and winning, too, that I felt all the old fascination creeping over me. If only she would be natural and share her confidence with her friends, and not keep them outside the door, as it were! Yet she is the sort of woman I think a man would die for! I asked for her mother and father; something kept me from inquiring for Dr. Roberts, but after answering my questions she added, with that little frosty touch that tinges her voice at times, 'You may not have heard that I am no longer engaged to Dr. Roberts!' That was all. I, like an awkward

goose, mumbled something about being very sorry, but she looked up as unruffled and calm as possible, saying, 'And why, please?'

* * * * *

Sunday Night. The Cortrights asked me to make a fourth on their drive to Pine Ridge to see the Bradfords this afternoon, and I found myself beside Ivory Steele on the back seat of the surrey. Lavinia evidently does not trust Martin's driving implicitly, for she always sits beside him, notwithstanding that the mare is of the respectable Roman-nosed family variety, chosen by no less weighty a judge in such matters than Timothy Saunders himself. But I must confess that Martin does hold the reins in a singular manner and is manifestly nervous when Whitefoot makes them captive with her long tail.

Ivory seems at least to have a keen verbal appreciation of nature, and to have revelled in the beauty of the afternoon, now leaning backward to watch the upward song flight of some martins, now pointing out a towhee, or perhaps a thrasher or ovenbird running among the crisp, last year's grasses that huddle between the tall wayside ferns, until, gradually sinking to their destiny, they become earth themselves. Name of bird or flower fell trippingly from her tongue, that touched lightly, yet

knowingly, upon many subjects; and I could read her pleasure in the cloud changes written in her face. Then again she reached out to grasp a lovely cluster of the pinxter flower, as we threaded a grass-tracked lane, but in a moment more she had discarded it again and it fell to the dust. "If she only had spontaneity, what a charming companion she might be!" I thought. She was not supercilious, as on the day of our meeting in New York. What is it, — this thin yet palpable veil by which she is surrounded? Is it mere egotism unchecked, or is she possessed by the spirit of negation in which Professor Nordschau so firmly believes, and is thus battling with the laws of two natures?

When we had climbed the last hill to the Ridge, plump Whitefoot, only accustomed to the level turnpike between Oaklands and Bridgeton, began to tire, for the day was summerlike, and gave neighs of remonstrance; so that when we reached the Bradford place Horace suggested that the mare should be unharnessed and rubbed down, and the two men went together toward the great barns, a little village in themselves.

As we three women entered the gate between the box bushes and turned into the path around the house as Horace had directed, saying that the family

were in the garden, an exquisite scene lay before us backgrounded by a misty green wall set with amethyst lilac blooms.

Little Anne was seated in a low, fiddle-backed chair, whose worn arms told that it had belonged to some far-back generation; her frock was white, and aslant on her red-gold hair was a loosely twisted wreath of buttercups of her mother's fashioning. Beside her knelt Sylvia with one arm thrown round the chair-back, and at the other side, leaning forward, stood old Mrs. Bradford herself holding up her apron, in which were huddled a newly hatched, but lusty, brood of downy chickens, which the child was caressing rather dubiously, one by one, with a pudgy forefinger.

"A new version of 'The Enthronement'! I wish Bouguereau were here to paint it!" whispered Lavinia Cortright, stopping us by a gesture. It was over in a second more, for the shifting gravel betrayed us, and Sylvia sprang up, while the elder woman, replacing the chicks in their covered basket and taking Anne by the hand, came forward smiling.

How little she had changed since that April day over three years ago, when I had first surprised her at her sewing, with the yearning smile of hope upon her face, and taking me to her garden where the yellow bells and daffies were in bloom, she had told me

its story and how she and her husband always went a-maying together from the first to last!

Now the drooping line had left the mouth corners and the smile was of hope fulfilled and overflowing. Three years younger and not older she looked, and this tricking of time lay in the light touch with which Sylvia replaced the thin knitted shawl that had dropped from her shoulders, and Anne pulled her head down to cover her eyes carefully with her little hands, followed by a kiss on her chin for a surprise, chuckling meanwhile and finally throwing herself into the open arms in an abandonment of glee, shouting, "Granny, pretty granny!"

We gravitated naturally toward the deep-seated porch, as we talked of many things, Mrs. Bradford leading back to baby Anne at every suitable pause, until she fain must laugh at herself. Presently the men came up, and immediately we broke into two groups, one of women's talk and one of men's—or rather books and their making; and the men, lighting their pipes, drifted through the garden toward the orchard where the apple buds were showing colour, Ivory walking between them, and as they disappeared Deacon Bradford's garden had a new experience—it saw the smoke curl from a cigarette held daintily between the slender fingers

of a young and charming woman! Happily the deacon's widow did not see, for she would have been so disappointed.

An hour later Sylvia served afternoon tea from the same quaint china service that had given me good cheer on my first visit, and as we all sat and sipped and munched "Cousin Esther's" nut cakes, Ivory and Sylvia fell into reminiscences.

"You are fulfilling your old-time ambition to be a writer—does it satisfy you, now that you are being recognized?"

"Yes and no; it is worth much as an experience, but is not satisfactory enough for a finality," replied Ivory, dreamily, as if she were unaware of her words, or that any one was listening. Then, pulling herself together with a start, she said almost sharply, "And what of your ambitions? you know you used to write poetry, and once perpetrated a perfectly constructed sonnet upon 'Fidelity' that Professor Bradford said might easily pass for Wordsworth! Confess, perhaps you are writing under an assumed name,—it is a vogue nowadays with people who do not wish to assume the open responsibility of appearing clever!"

"No," laughed Sylvia, good-naturedly, without betraying the slightest trace of annoyance, "I am

ingloriously mute, and shine wholly by reflected glory, a light which incidentally I may say I try to keep well trimmed and in order."

"Meaning that you take notes and do copying for the Professor," continued Ivory; "that is better than nothing, and well enough perhaps if one can do no better, but it is not like having an individual intellectual grip!"

Somehow the speech jarred on us all, and the veil that had been lifted for a time again fell about Ivory, shutting her out from us. On the drive home, for they were to return with me for supper, Lavinia sat by my side, for some unknown reason, leaving Martin and Whitefoot to fate and Ivory Steele.

Toward the end of the evening, just before parting time, we were in father's study. He was showing Ivory some of his rare editions of Americana, while Martin browsed among the shelves and Evan listened to Lavinia's thousand and one garden queries, trying to fit each with a practical answer. In passing his desk father knocked a medical magazine to the floor, which, as he picked it up, seemed to bring something to his mind. "By the way, Barbara," he half called to me, for I was coming toward him across the hall, "you asked me yester-

day whom we were to send as delegate from our Medical Society to the Vienna Conference next September. John Roberts of the New York State branch has been selected, and as he has recently won the gold medal offered last year by that same conference for his brilliant paper on 'The Effect of Education upon the Nervous Diseases of Women,' his going will be a double triumph for him. A fine, thinking fellow he is, too, — conservative, but progressive. I met him many times at the clinic I attended in New York two years ago!"

What strange electric force brought this random topic to the surface at this moment? I glanced at Ivory, whose back was turned; she did not move a muscle, but I could feel her figure turn rigid.

This was his surprise and the reason that he had wished her to go abroad in August, that she too might share in his reward! Poor John Roberts! In the morning Ivory Steele will go home and our meeting ways will part once more!

XVI

TWO LETTERS AND A TRAGEDY

June 10th. At last the year has caught up with itself, as the saying goes, which means that flower and leaf have finally developed with apparent regard for the artificial calendar that man devises largely for his own deception, and that neither frost, drought, nor undue rain has imperilled the crop of strawberries. Now the earth is warm enough to allow nighthawk and whippoorwill to trust their nestless eggs to its breast, and the laggard goldfinches in the mad ecstasy of their courting are swinging and feeding on the long grasses already heavy with seed, or casting their song broadcast to the winds as they search the tree-tops for airy summer apartments. As for the peaches, those rash tempters of providence who must needs withstand all the united perils of frost, summer tornado, and blighting September rain, he is a braggart indeed who will boast of his peach crop until it is safely eaten !

There is no denying that the birds confiscate half

of our berries. Confiscate? No, lay claim to them is the proper term, for they do it openly, boldly, and much as if they were carrying out their part of an inter-race treaty by which we agreed to be content with half of every berry, and gave them quitclaim to the other half. For they are most scrupulous to take but a portion of each one, and if it always chanced to be the ripe half, do not blame them, but two of the laws of nature: the first that causes strawberries to ripen on one side sooner than on the other; the second law having passed into a proverb — “First come, first served.”

Martin Cortright has netted his strawberry bed. He is at present practising a sort of literary gardening, wherein he consults the advice of many books both grave, gay, and of mixed nationalities, until I should think his methods would give any self-respecting vegetable nervous prostration or fatty degeneration, according to circumstances. It was the former undoubtedly that made his first planting of tall peas so slender and nerveless that they refused to cling to the brush and lay huddled in little rifts until a smart shower reduced them to pulp. He had followed the dinky directions given by some amateur of window-box experience that said, “Quicken the ground with wood-ashes, sow the peas thick,

and thin out to an inch apart." How the country-bred laugh at the idea of thinning out a hundred feet of peas, for if you do it the moment they show three leaves you cannot tell if you have allowed the fittest to survive, and if you wait each one clings to his neighbour with tight clasped tendril fingers, all swaying together in the drill like a line of timid bathers bracing themselves against the waves; while it was assuredly fatty degeneration of the heart that caused the early radishes, that Martin bore so proudly on a glass tray one morning across lots up the hill in time for father's breakfast, to be hollow and peppery as April-fool candy, making Evan almost choke to death. When he had recovered he took down one of his most precious tomes, "Proverbs adapted for Ye Gentle Gardener," which says, "The empty radish hath the largest head"—and recommended its faithful perusal to Martin, who borrowed the volume in good part and all seriousness.

As to Martin's netting manœuvres, they were direct in the extreme, also very expensive; yet if the birds had been simple-minded as the master, all might have gone well. He caused the entire bed to be railed about and also divided in cross-sections about five feet from the ground, that the fruit might be gath-

ered beneath the net, which was of cotton like a loose-meshed twine hammock, reaching the ground on all sides and tacked tight to the supports.

Lavinia called me to admire it the day that it was finished, before the fruit showed any sign of colour, and for a time, at least, it was the topic of the neighbourhood. The amateurs waxed enthusiastic, especially Neil Gordon, who has taken the Tolford place next below the Cortrights', and whom, as he was late in starting his garden, Martin had rashly promised to supply with fruit. The severely practical shook their heads and began to reduce the price of wood, netting, and labour into quarts of strawberries after the manner of the mental arithmetic problems of our youth.

It is a most wonderful season for birds, both in quantity and variety, and the overture to the morning opera is rich with the rolling undertow of the robins, that no other voice can supply, while the finale is sustained by a wild gypsy stringed orchestra, composed of cat-birds innumerable.

Two or three days ago I began to feel that Martin's netting extravagance was after all perhaps worth while, for we cannot pass our strawberry bed, even at sunset, but what a flock of birds wheels off and, without any idea of leaving, perches near, making

remarks that sometimes sound detrimental to our characters. This morning I chanced to go down to "Greenwich Inn" with my first bunch of sweet peas for Lavinia, the dwarf sorts that I sow in front of my nasturtiums and pull up after their first profuse blooming. It is strange, is it not, how a certain kind of amiable rivalry is one of the foundations of gardening? As soon as the growing season opens people begin to wave their successful garden products at each other, from the head gardeners, who are masters of glass on the Bluffs, down to my boys, who, having invested a dollar in mushroom spawn, aided and abetted by Timothy Saunders, made a forcing-bed of the old glass-topped chicken house, where stable manure is stored, and have been rushing frantically out every morning to see if any have "poked" in the night. To-day they were rewarded by four earthy, pink-lined umbrellas, that have, I think, been carried the length and breadth of Oaklands, including the Bluffs, in spite of the fact that I heard Richard impressing upon Martha Corkle, who, being down at the house, was called upon for admiration, that "they mustn't wither but be cooked when they're fresh laid."

The fate of the unsuccessful garden "sass" is also most instructive, for, unseen by the eye of the rival,

it is swiftly hidden in the waste heap, there to turn to useful fertilizer. How nice it would be if all our mistakes, instead of constantly stubbing our toes, could be hustled away and turned into good honest manure to nourish new life!

I could not find either Lavinia or Martin anywhere about the house, and so concluded that they were out worshipping at the strawberry bed; nor was I mistaken. There they sat, side by side, on a canopy-topped garden-seat, — I *think* they had been holding hands quite recently from the bit of clay that smudged Lavinia's otherwise spotless fingers at the knuckles, for Martin's paws and general attire gave evidence of "weeding." But then of course when a woman marries at fifty, there isn't enough of life left to have her hand held at seasonable hours, for even when one begins at twenty-two time is short enough.

The couple were there for the purpose of gazing at the strawberry bed, and for the moment divided their thoughts with my boys and their four precious mushrooms, wrapped in tissue paper and embedded in my sweet-grass darning basket, that I could not refuse for the carrying of such precious freight.

Now as an object of art the strawberry bed might be considered out of place, for it either resembled a large cotton chicken house or innumerable curtains

drying on stretchers, according as to whether you looked across or down upon it. To my mind one of the charms of having a strawberry bed, aside from the eating of the fruit,—which of course we could buy very cheaply, and without the bother of picking, from the Pine Ridge fruit farmers, who pass this way en route to Bridgeton every day of the season,—is the pleasure of a morning in looking over the mass of deep-green leaves and seeing the dew diamonds strung upon the spider webs, and the yellow and blackbodied spinners reeling the spoils of night into their larders, hand over hand, as a human fisherman frees his nets; and watching the gold-hearted star-blossoms open, which, after the magic pollen touch, yield place to fruitage that, in turn, goes through opal tints of clouded green to gleaming crimson. Then, when all is ripe and ready, going among the vines with a leaf-covered saucer in hand, and picking here a great berry and there another that the birds overlooked in their harvesting, until it is piled with fruit perfect in form, condition, aroma, and clean-stemmed hulls. When you set your offering before the master, who was bred to eat both strawberries and boiled eggs as individual articles, not as jam and custard, he will hold the fruit by its hull handle in his right hand



“There they sat, side by side. . . . I *think* they had been holding hands.”



as he deftly dips it in the sugar, while perhaps, if she does not object, he may hold the picker's fingers with the left and give her every other berry.

"Look at those stupid robins sitting over there on the grape arbour staring at us," said Lavinia; "they know that they cannot get the fruit, and yet they haven't sense enough to go away."

"Yes, I have observed how unintelligent they are," responded Martin, dreamily; "a quick-witted cat-bird would never waste its time in that way. I think they have compassed the situation perfectly, and I've hardly seen one down here in the garden this week, though I know that there are several nests in the bushes near the back porch."

"Perhaps yours have gone to join ours," I ventured.

"No, they haven't!" shouted Ian, who had left the path and was peering through the netting on the orchard side of the bed. "Uncle Martin, come quick and look! They're all in here — yours and ours and everybody's — just gobbling, and some big, scratching, brown thrashers, too!" and, forgetful of the mushrooms, he clapped his hands and began to caper about.

Quickly as Martin circled the strawberry bed, Lavinia was there before him, and the expression

of serio-comic dismay pictured by their faces was worthy of perpetuation in a sketch.

It had rained many times since the net had been put up and tightly fastened to the crosspieces without due allowance for play or shrinkage. Likewise the sun had done its work, so that on two sides of the enclosure, concealed by a line of old quince bushes meshed by Chinese honeysuckle, not only had the cotton snapped and pulled away from its fastenings, but it had shrunk as well, and swung a clear foot above the grass. From bushes to grass, and thence to the banquet, the quick-witted cat-birds had indeed found the road, in spite of the assurance of one of Martin's "Guides to Gardening" (English I think it must have been for its faith in birdish conservatism) to the effect that, "If a net be merely spread over a strawberry bed, the birds will not molest the fruit, as nature teaches them to avoid anything of this sort as a possible trap." With us, evidently, cat-birds are able to do some deep thinking!

Lavinia's garden is as dainty and complete as herself, and yet through it all I can clearly see the early influence of her back yard. Everything is neat and precise, every scrap of room is utilized, and all the lines are either parallel or exactly at right angles; not a sweep or curve of fancy, no generous

massings or chance for anything to escape bounds and run riot. Though it is only middle June, I know that in September everything will be as much in order and restrained as now. Both Lavinia and Martin have overcome many of their conservative city habits and have expanded, yet they cannot alter the mould in which they were made and be mistaken for natives, any more than Sukey Crandon or myself arrayed in our best with company manners in our card cases, and veils carefully draped from our hat brims, could be mistaken for people of the Whirlpool.

Watch Lavinia pick a bouquet, — *pick* is the term, not *gather*; the latter word implies a lavishness — and you can at once tell by her attitude that she has been used to cutting *a* rose, not roses! It is the same with Martin when he crosses the road of a muddy day, — you would know by the way in which he endeavours to aim his feet at dry spots, and fails to pause on them, that his calculation had always been based upon pavements, and not the subtleties of earth and water in the combination of mud!

Yet it is a delight to be with them, and their definite individualities, so conservative as to belong to a by-gone day, give the friendship an aroma

such as lingers about keepsakes laid away in a box of sandalwood. So frequently do Martin and father exchange informal schoolboy visits that already there is a track worn crosswise down from our stile and wild walk to the Cortrights' orchard, though one would never guess that its devious and seemingly aimless curves and windings were trodden by two entirely sober men of sixty odd, bent on exchanging a new idea, the latest magazine, or merely a hand-shake,—that is unless they had made a specialty of studying cattle tracks in a hillside pasture, and noticed the strange effect an almost invisible change in the grade has upon the course of even a sturdy four foot. Here and there along the way, where the ground is perfectly level, are Martin's halting spots, where he may be often seen standing cross-legged with back against a tree, while he dips into the volume he carries, or deliberately unfolds and reads the newspaper the postman has brought as he was starting.

* * * * *

The last few weeks have been rather anxious ones hereabout, for they have had diphtheria in the children's ward at the hospital, besides a few scattered cases in Bridgeton. One death alone occurred—that of an only child—and caused father, who

was called in consultation too late, such anguish that he remained in his study all day long; and when I carried in his luncheon, I found him sitting in his great chair, his eyes hidden by his hand, and he would not speak of the case. So it was not until to-day, in copying his letter regarding the matter, that I learned the details.

Of late I have been making-up my arrears in arranging and transferring father's correspondence and book notes, and there are two of these letters that I am copying in my own Wonder Book because they are directly in line with certain attitudes of modern woman, that Lavinia Cortright, Sukey Crandon, and I have had forced upon us in all our home-spun domesticity. Each letter is from a different point of view, and yet rightly fitted they supplement rather than contradict each other.

“TO DR. RICHARD RUSSELL

“From Anne, wife of Aquila Truesdale, Professor of Sociology

“BOSTON, *March* —, 19 .

“*My dear Dr. Russell:* My husband is at present under the control of a severe influenza, and asks me to explain his delay in answering your last letter of the ‘Round Robin’ series, enclosing one from Professor Nordschau, as well as for the non-

appearance of the table of statistics concerning marriage among college women, that he promised several months ago.

“Having formally done this I am minded to usurp my husband’s pen and gossip with you for a time upon the subject that is so absorbing to you three wise men, but I have no cut-and-dried statistics to give, merely the impressions of a woman who, though married and the mother of sons only, has lived much with those of her own sex and has had unusual opportunities of understanding their less comprehensible moods. And let me say now, at the very beginning, that tabulated statistics have to my mind no bearing whatever upon your moot question, ‘The Effect of Education upon Woman.’

“In the first place the saying that ‘Facts cannot lie’ is itself subject to the qualifying question, ‘What are facts?’ and the whole subject of woman’s general education and the effect upon herself and civilization in general is too new from all standpoints to give any strong significance to statistics formulated thereupon.

“Being myself a graduate of Nassau College (which I believe with one other to be the best equipped for the real needs and aims of the average young woman, being neither a ‘co-ed’ nor yet a

'parallel' institution), both from love of study and the force of circumstances that made self-support a necessity, I continued there, from the time of my graduation, as tutor and instructor in natural sciences until my marriage with Professor Truesdale.

"At this time I was thirty-one and had a professorship almost within my grasp. Many of my contemporaries urged me not to relinquish old ties for the new one, but to follow both vocations at the same time. I was thus brought sharply face to face with the question as to whether matrimony should cut short a woman's professional career, when it is only an added stimulus to that of the man.

"I have not without struggle answered it to my own satisfaction. Whether it would be to that of other women similarly situated I cannot tell, for the outcome of such matters with our sex is more apt to be the result of individual temperament. Personally I found that to keep true to both my domestic and professional relations I could not remain a woman merely, but must carry on the vocation of the woman to whom it is given to remain at home together with that of the man who goes forth and must therefore become literally bi-sexual. As this condition does not naturally obtain except in the lowest forms of animal life,

the step would clearly be one of retrogression, which is what we all seek to avoid!

“Personally speaking (always, please remember), I soon discovered that for the primal parts of a family to follow either different or even the same professions (and I think the latter case the more dangerous in generating differences of opinion) was to create a competitive standpoint destructive to the finer courtesies of married life upon which its permanence is so largely founded.

“Then, pray, when the man and wife are called in separate directions by their vocations, can there be but one result? Professor Truesdale had an excellent opening in Massachusetts; what would my remaining at Nassau have done? No, I gave up a professional career, in which few women can do as well as the average man. Why? Because woman being the mould of the race, nature will never allow her to throw off successfully her centripetal personality. Then too the folly of a married woman, mistress by divine right of the home half of the social sphere, making herself a creature of specific engagements and of placing herself voluntarily at the beck and call of the outside world! Her own sphere of intellectual wifehood demands not merely her body but all her other faculties for its own, for there is

often a mental and intellectual infidelity to domestic ties on the part of both sexes that is only less to be deplored, because less understood, than mere physical brute infidelity. Women will realize this when they are more accustomed to education and treat it in all its true seriousness and not like a serio-comic toy, a thing of vogue, caprice, or aimless experiment.

“The difficulty is that the whole matter is too new for any one to stand off and get the true perspective. What is the first century of a republic? A time of crudity, shifting values and conditions, of gathering in people and material in the rough for future development. We do not seem to realize that we are in the first century of the general education of woman. But when we do, much that seems disquieting to those of us who, though at middle life, not only have lived, but with senses still aquiver are bound tightly to life in their children, can be endured by thought of the sure outcome.

“What a proof of the crude and half-baked condition of affairs lies in the continual exhibition of ‘woman’s work’ in the line of the arts and sciences; whereas, if it is worthy of a showing, it should not thus bear a label of limitation, for the achievements of genius are beyond the sex lines.

“Also the human child of to-day is being made the subject of educational experiments that cheat him out of much of the comfortable, cuddled period of childhood that is his due—he is too much mentally dissected and specialized and his plays reduced to a philosophic basis, and his sleep-going even is often a time of excruciation and discipline.

“Meanwhile, even though the spectacle is somewhat distressing, the same course must be followed as with our national life. During the first century of our political republic we were of a necessity crudely patriotic; we strutted, flapped our wings, crowed often when not challenged (a trick of immature roosters), and now that we have had long since a hundredth birthday and several wars we are fit to sit in the hall of nations—and learn!

“In that time to come our daughters will cease from troubling us. There will be no foolish alarm of race suicide, for it will be known that we needs must breed the artistic temperament by race blending. One man or woman of right thought and action, it will be seen, will outweigh a score of mere human bodies, even as a thoroughbred horse outvalues a bag of rabbits.

“Naturally enough while we are living through this first century of development there will be many

who will suffer the discomfort brought by experiment; there will be much useless sacrifice and not a few disrupted homes caused by those who hold and practise the theory that marriage is merely an incident, and not a finality implying the responsibilities of the life domestic, just as happens where two elements struggle for supremacy in any sort of war.

“You men also will have to change your mental attitude and openly confess that to be an intelligent and companionable woman domestic is culture’s best result, and is the one position which rivals if not transcends genius itself.

“Ah, yes! I know you may *think* this always in your hearts, but it is quite as much your fault as ours if we women take to devious ways. Your highest praise of a woman among yourselves is that she ‘has the mind of a man’ or is as ‘logical as a man.’ You not only applaud as an exhibition of grit the young thing who goes forth, often without necessity, and crowds her brethren out of your office for a living and keenly sympathize with her struggles, but you take it as a matter of course that only privilege attends the lot of the other woman who consents to marry you and earn her bread by saving your crumbs and suiting your caprices.

When the period of development is completed men will have learned perhaps, also by a little hard experience, the real values of life and of woman.

“How savage poor Nordschau is in his last epistle! One would think he feared having to knit his own enormous socks and pickle his sauer-kraut in the immediate future; but the idea of general female education must appall even a philosopher of his advancement in a land where ‘*Kirche, Kinder und Küchen*’ is the imperial limit for the sex. Or does he fear that having written a conclusive treatise on The Evolution of Sex the whole matter is about to *revolute* or ‘go back on him,’ as the vernacular puts it? However, amid his invectives and rough, unqualified assurance, there are three paragraphs that strike home and contain undeniable truth, even under my imperfect translation.

* * * * *

“With woman the permanence of the broader training that fits for the higher professions can never be relied upon, and therefore it is of little consideration. As long as she is the Matrix of the race when her hour strikes, she must yield or suffer, for nature forbids the double strain.”

* * * * *

“Nature had a purpose when she built woman about a

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citadel of personal thought called jealousy, thereby setting the seal of monogamy upon the human race.'

* * * * *

"It is the civilization of the Christian centuries alone that has removed from woman the toil of the beast. Let her take heed in her struggle for supremacy. Among the birds of prey the female is the more powerful, but all the responsibility for the race is hers. In the hive the female rules absolute and the male is but her tool to be used and as quickly dispensed with. The supremacy of the one to the degradation of the other is decadence even as free love is not the liberality of advanced thought, but the slime of brain decay.'

* * * * *

"By the way, as I write my husband has at last handed me the statistics about the marriage of college women, and, though candidly I do not think they amount to much, I enclose them. They would seem to prove, if anything, either that it takes our girls longer to recover from the 'swelled head' produced by their education than their brothers, or else — well, being a woman it would be ill-natured for me to make the remark I intended, but you will see that a large proportion of the marriages are what would commonly be called 'late in life.' What is the moral? Aquila — who has now crawled into the study in his wrapper, wearing blue glasses, and signifying that he needs wifely attention also to have the morning paper read to him, etc. — says it is that these women tried

many substitutes for the companionship of man but finding none satisfactory finally surrendered, at least all those who were in any way besieged! But that is a personal, not an official, opinion, he declares.

"You may forward this to Nordschau, if you think it will stir him to wrath and a reply.

"As ever, sincerely your friend,

"ANNA TRUESDALE (*Optimist*)."

• • • • •

"From Dr. Richard Russell to Mrs. Truesdale

"OAKLANDS, *June* —, 19—.

"MY DEAR PROFESSOR (that might have been!): —

"The sight of your hand and the sound of your sprightly conversation, albeit a sheet of paper intervenes, brings back vividly the many pleasant hours that I have had at your house in the between times of our college reunions. While at the same moment the note that you sound quietly, yet distinctly, concerning the latent danger in professional rivalry between husband and wife, finds its key-note in an experience that I have recently undergone; and so I will write of it to you under the same seal of professional privacy that envelops the whole correspondence with your husband and Nordschau.

"Not that the facts of the case most unfortu-

nately are in any way private property; the reservation is simply for their bearing upon our discussions.

"You and your husband both know Dr. Max Gerarde, for he has been at your house and Truesdale has often spoken of his attainments in the literature of his profession, as well as his skill in pathology and diagnosis. In fact he has altogether outgrown his present bounds and a month ago completed his arrangements for quitting general practice and going to New York in the autumn, to be in closer touch with the Medical College, where he has attained to a professorship, as well as to be near certain hospitals where he will hold important clinics. You know of his wife, also a physician, through her work and writings, even if, as I think, neither you nor Truesdale have met her personally.

"On her return with her husband soon after their marriage I must confess to having held the perhaps too conservative opinion that whatever the competence of a woman as a nurse or howsoever her intellectual power as a practising physician, I feared the limitations of physique and nerve must always stand in the way of complete success, for ethical as well as other reasons. Also I was opposed to admitting a woman to the staff of our hospital, even though the large ward for children was a plausible excuse.

Dr. Max Gerarde, however, took the stand that where he was welcome she should also be honoured, and consequently she was appointed. Understand me fully, the objection had not the slightest personal basis, for Dr. Joan Gerarde is herself a wonder of erudition and comes of a family who radiate culture; from such an one I should expect a nicety of discernment and refinement of instinct that would do much to avoid the danger points.

“I did not suppose that the hospital association would be long continued, but the birth of their son three years ago made apparently no difference. They had their offices in the same house, but while Dr. Max had his laboratory at the hospital, Dr. Joan had hers at home and took the sometimes dangerous material for microscopy even into a room where she allowed the boy to play about her. But then assuredly if she did not let him share her almost endless working hours, what time had she for him?

“Their practice ran in widely different channels, for hers was almost wholly among women and children — though in diseases of the latter he is a specialist; but the staff have often remarked upon the fact of her freedom from favouritism, for that, in cases of consultation, she more often would call in another than Dr. Max.

“She also, it was noticed, had most decided opinions, based upon her own conclusions, and he was a far more active champion of her position than she of his.

“Several times when contagious diseases have developed in the children’s ward, and a patient of hers has been removed to the ‘Hospital in the Field,’ as we call our out-hospital or infectious adjunct, I have sought to arrange for some other physician to take up the case, thinking of her boy at home, and judging that the male attire and hair were less liable to carry infection. No, she always repulsed me with quite unnecessary sharpness it seemed, until a recent very serious outbreak of diphtheria, in a slum of the great factory town, filled our out-hospital, and Dr. Max tried his persuasion and authority also, but with no good effect.

“Be this as it may, their boy, after the epidemic was quite trodden out, developed the disease, and against all precedent of medical etiquette she wished to take charge herself. Dr. Max, however, brought in a neighbouring practitioner, with whom he decided that, as the boy had little strength at the start, quick methods must be used and antitoxin administered. Then Dr. Joan, pitted in theory against the serum, would not hear of it; professional pride and mother

love wrestling together unsettled her brain and unhinged her judgment.

“A day was lost, and with antitoxin it is the hours that count and every one of delay cubes the danger. They sent for me, both, but by separate messengers, and when I arrived thirty-six hours had passed, but there they still held their attitude as rivals. I, agreeing with Max, administered, as rapidly as might be, the deferred hope. It was too late; the little heart failed.

“Then took place a scene that my forty years of witnessing of the supreme moment had never conceived or dreamed of. Two physicians at war, glaring across a dead body, — and that of their own son, — the man dumb in his bereavement, frozen in his horror, will never again, I believe, open his lips to her, the mother, while the woman launched the single word ‘*murderer*’ at the father of her child!

“Neither Dante nor the old moralists could conceive or voice the situation, for it is the climax of purely modern conditions, — the woman errant beside herself, — a twentieth-century vision of the Spirit that Denies!

“Of all the haunting sorrows I have seen and known none has approached this yet. In my heart I said, ‘Thank God the child is dead; what hope had he in life?’

"This was two weeks ago. Max Gerarde, broken and grown old it would seem in an hour, has gone abroad and will travel until he returns to his professorship in New York in the autumn. Mrs. Gerarde remains here and it is said, after a period of disinfection, will continue her professional life without a break. She, however, has had the tact to send her resignation to the hospital! God help us, is there any beast so frightful in its fury, any devil so cruel, as the woman who forgets herself, the horror being great in proportion to her previous intelligence?

"You had much before you in your own career, — how much your husband once told me with trepidation and a full realization of what you were putting from you when eighteen years ago he was awaiting your decision, and wondering if he had a right to accept the sacrifice. I calmed his fears that day and argued with his scruples, assuming a responsibility, yet believing that I knew the true heart of woman. That I was not wrong your letter has told me, and in the added conviction, born of my late experience, I make you this free confession.

"Your husband's friend and yours.

"RICHARD RUSSELL."

XVII

THE DEVELOPING OF A NEGATIVE

July 13th. For a full month, until to-day, I have left closed my attic desk and whispered no secrets in inky words of wonder to my white-paged confessor. Nor have I even thrown back the window on the sunset side of this my upper world to watch the afterglow, or see the eager, slim young moon, led by the evening star, hasten to wrap herself within its rainbow draperies. And lo, on the window-sill, quite unobserved, the phœbe bird has banked a nest of moss and taken up the vigil for me, while over the lowered sash of the north window a barn-swallow has ventured in and plastered him a bungalow along the rafter above my desk, so that upon its lid lie two fragments of cinnamon-speckled, white egg-shell, telling the nest is already occupied.

Hush! the birds are returning! Spying me, they retreat, with their musical call changing to a quivering twitter of alarm, which is answered from the nest, until, gradually reassured, they take me into

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their confidence, even as they trust the horses and cattle in the farm barns, and dart in and out over my head.

All the month the earth and the things of it have held me too close even to let me go three pairs of stairs' height above it. Not the grovelling things of the earth, that the Scriptures censure by simile, but the loving, pulsing, adorable things of the ground, the visions of opening flowers, of almost miraculous growth, the pleasure of subtle odours, the refreshment of sudden showers painting the grass, the gleam of jewelled butterflies that come forth as it were from nowhere, seemingly created in the twinkling of an eye from the kiss of the sun on the earth's bosom.

In winter one must endure, and through enduring learn. In spring life is all pushing, preparing, and sowing. The autumn is harvest time, but in summer one may really live, if ever, without thinking, and, careless of weather or clothing, bask in the font of life itself. Before the June roses have dissolved into fragrant air and a shower of petals, the later sturdy but less fragrant climbers stretch their arching arms to make a bridge between the delicate perfumes and tints of the June garden and the flaming July colours, that increase in intensity as the season advances until

they end in the final autumnal conflagration of fiery-tongued salvias and glowing poker plants.

The tall, cool spires of shaded blue larkspur have disappeared, together with the rosy-fingered foxgloves and Madonna lilies. Now pillars of hollyhocks draw the eye in an opposite quarter, where their pollen-dusted disks glow with every shade of crimson, cherry, vermilion, apricot, rose, blush yellow, or ivory white, and the brighter hues they fail to radiate are usurped by the nasturtiums opposite, while in the grass border the Shirley poppies wave their petal wings with every breeze, like a resting flock of tropic butterflies, poised for new flight.

When night steals over the garden, the quarter moon outlines and suggests rather than reveals, sil-vering the dew and the ground mist; then a change comes and I sit in the arbour hedged by old-fashioned prairie-roses and apple-scented sweetbrier, and look out on a lake as mystic and magical as that through which the hand arose that bore the sword Excalibur.

But my broad lake of the summer-night dream has two faithful beacon lights; one close at my side burns steadily, the distant lighthouse flashes and revolves, and they both speak a language of their own. The near-by is Evan's cigar tip, the farther

one the milder weed that blends with father's meditations as he paces to and fro across the garden top, at every turn showing the flash anew; while over all the lake, emerging from the coves hidden in shadow, or following the moon path, come the little lantern-hung pleasure crafts of summer nights—the fireflies, and bats, like broomstick witches, tumble about the air.

Sitting in the blissful companionship of scarce broken silence, I often wonder how a woman who has not been reared with men sees into the depths of life by the light of her own feminine self-consciousness only. Since mother went away and left my baby fingers twined in father's, it has always been a man's sustaining hand that has reached out to me in times happy or troublous, father's on one side, Evan's on the other, and then the boys, now having to be led, but soon to be my advance guard when I shall need it most. Here in the garden at night I can almost gauge Evan's thoughts by his cigar point. When he is deep in peaceful revery the light is steady, like his breathing; when a perplexity arises that his brain does not at once remove, he takes quick, short puffs, like a locomotive starting on an up-grade; then when he is about to speak he draws rapidly and steadily to keep the flame alive during the intermission.

Smoking is in itself an art, besides the judicious choosing of the medium; as the smoker is well or little versed in it, so is it made a pleasure or a pest. Some men suck their cigars like sticks of barley candy, others blow at them like willow whistles, often taking them from their lips and gazing on them in a reproachful way that suggests poor draft, while others again roll them about until they hang in rags, and, being greedy as well as restless, cling to them until the flame and the mouth-moist tobacco meet, a combination that no word a woman may use fully describes. Men who commit this crime or leave dead, cold cigars about a room all night should be frowned into oblivion by their wives, if ever they venture into sniffing distance.

* * * * *

Lately the garden of night has had new visitors, as unexpected to me as if the Martians had descended and presented Evan with a working plan of their system of irrigation.

One of the first of the really balmy moonlit evenings, less than a week ago, we had but finished our coffee on the porch when the dogs began to bark and the click of the gate, leading toward the Bluffs, was followed by a little scream and a murmur of voices.

The Cortrights and Gordons often walk up of an evening, but they come the back way, using the lane route if it is too damp to come by the cross-lot trail ; so, thinking it must be some one for father, I went down the walk to assure whomsoever the dogs had frightened that the hounds were all bark and no bite, and walked plump into — whom? Mrs. Jenks-Smith and Jane Crandon!

“Is any one ill? is anything the matter?” I cried in alarm, for the sight of the Lady of the Bluffs walking at any time was astonishing, and to find her thus at night unattended by either coachman or footman, and not even the rumble of a wheel in the distance to account for her coming, was unparalleled! Also she of the elaborate dinner toilets was clad in a very informal sort of organdie tea-gown, the tail of which was whisked over her arm, while a long, gauzy silk scarf enveloped her head and shoulders.

“Nobody’s ill and nothing’s the matter!” she replied with a jerky laugh, as she strove to disentangle her hair from the tenacious silk, “though Parker put the same question in different words when he saw me leaving by the front door with no orders and no explanations. You see I get along of day-times well enough, there’s always something kicking up on the place or somebody dropping in; but the

evenings are something positively dreadful because up by us people hold to the city custom of not going anywhere of an evening unless by invitation. So unless I play solitaire I'm cut clean out of cards, for Jane here, though she isn't bigoted, can't seem to appreciate the difference between a king's and a jack's get-up.

"So I said to her after dinner, 'What did you girls at home do of summer nights to keep from turning into tree-toads glued to the porch?'

"'We used to walk out in the open roads and visit the neighbours over their fences as they sat on each other's stoops, or go down to the store for a yeast cake,' said she, 'because wherever we've been there have always been roads and neighbours, and we usually needed yeast! Then when we had come back, we felt as if we'd done something and been somewhere, and when we got to bed we only had to turn over once and we were asleep!'

I glanced at Jane, who, though she had only exchanged my greetings, was alertly attentive; and I could tell from a little quiver of nose and lips, that reminded me of Sukey, that she was possessed of a keen sense of humour.

"'Then,'" continued Mrs. Jenks-Smith, "said I — 'Let's try it — I mean walking down the road and call-

ing over fences, though I can't stretch the point as far as the yeast cake.' Imagine what Pierre would say if he heard of *me* asking for yeast at the post-office! Why, his reputation would be gone and mine too!

"Of course I'm not making real calls this summer, — it's truly a queer society law, too, when it's the one time in years I've really craved seeing people, — so it seemed as if chatting over the fences would sort of break the ice without making talk. But just as I got ready I began to realize that all the Bluffs houses were so far in that you can barely see 'em from the gates, much less talk over the fences. Why, you know, the Vanderveers' house is shoved so far back that it's knocked smash into the other road, which they pretend is a private drive when they have the coaching club stop en route to the Country Club house.

"'Where shall we go?' I said to Jane; 'money's a limit to many a plan.'

"'We might go down to the doctor's,' said she, and so here we are, and the dogs evidently mistook us for kitchen company, for they wagged as hard as they barked, just as the Vanderveer poodle does to the policeman on the Park Lane beat!

"Jane, will you get this fringe out of my hair? I only wore the thing to keep off bats. Have they ever troubled me? No, but I've always read in old tales

about bats coming out of the dark and fastening themselves in people's hair. Will we come to the porch and have some coffee? Yes, certainly, for I may as well tell you that I'm intending to stop right here for the evening, and I told Parker to send the depot wagon down for us at ten. He looked so shocked to see me straggling off in this way that I had to do something to comfort him. Besides it was all very well walking down hill, but I couldn't walk up again in this corset — it's too straight where I'm not, and interferes. Jane thinks I'd have better digestion and enjoy my food more if I wore a shorter one, so I'm going to change, for I'd like to feel really hungry again," and the Lady of the Bluffs sank into the arms of a hospitable rocker with a sigh of relief, while I slipped out for fresh coffee, and father and Evan came out of the shadows to greet her. Jane was seized meanwhile by the boys and lugged out to the tool house to see a young raccoon that one of the men from the lumber camp had brought them a few days ago for a pet, being the sixth of a series of experiments in the taming of wood creatures, all of which happily ended, as I hope this one will, in their return to the wild.

"Hot or iced coffee?" Mrs. Jenks-Smith asked, in reply to a similar question from me. "Oh, iced,

by all means, it's such a treat. Parker won't let me have it iced after dinner, only at luncheon. And what is that on the plate? Gingerbread! Real sticky molasses gingerbread! I wonder when I've seen any before outside of dreams, much less tasted it." (Jane returns with the boys, Ian having the coon, who is perched on his shoulder, by a slender string.) "I'm so tired of *petit fours* and all those confections. Jane here says she would make me gingerbread or any kind of cake and cookies I like, if she was not in awe of Pierre. But you see the other day when she was passing the kitchen she, without thinking it was any harm, went in to see him boning a chicken, and he, without speaking, turned his swivel eyes (they're up on top somehow like a frog's) on her like rapid-fire guns and swept her out of the door. Dismiss Parker and Pierre and get help I can control? My *dear*, what are you thinking of right in the middle of the season? Why, they come in a set like a pack of cards, and if I discard the ace and king what good are the rest? Then besides, Keeley would strike my name off her book at the agency!

"No, we talked it over and Jane hit upon an idea. 'Couldn't you have a kind of summer-house outside somewhere,' she asked, 'where you could do as

you please and play keep house, without upsetting the servants?’

“‘Done!’ I cried, ‘and I think we could keep it *chic* too, so’s not to hurt their feelings, until next year, when I certainly shall try a different lot.’ You know that Martha Corkle Saunders of yours? Well, she was telling Jane the other day that she thinks I’d feel more at home, now Jenks-Smith is gone, if I’d more women about. A middle-aged English body for housekeeper and her husband for butler, and the rest young maids, and it does sound comfortable.

“The next thing that happened was that Julie Vanderveer asked me if I didn’t want to take china-painting lessons of some poor relation of hers, who is boarding up in the woods for the summer, and teaching the young people at the Country Club. I thought it would be a great lark, and so did Jane. Julie Vanderveer said I must fix up a room for a studio, because it would not do to have people coming in and out when they chose, and dusting things. That made me think of the summer house again, and I consulted your husband here. What! didn’t he tell you? Thought it was my secret, I guess. He’s made me a plan of the sweetest little cottage with two big rooms inside and a tea-room veranda

across the front, trellises over the windows, and beds of old-fashioned flowers outside. One room is to be a model kitchen and the other a studio, and being all woodwork inside and out, it 'll be done in a month, —they began yesterday!

“I wondered how Pierre would take it, but it seems it's considered quite the thing for me, being *en deuil* (no, Jane dear, don't look pained; I didn't say devil, *deuil* is the French for mourning), to have unusual distractions, as they call them in France. And it will give us a place to go and dress as we like *en negligé*, until I can pull myself together and get the whip-hand of my house!”

Having thus freed her mind, the Lady of the Bluffs turned her attention to the gingerbread once more, and Jane unobtrusively, but pleasantly, joined in the conversation, telling Evan that she herself was to be allowed to start the cuttings and seeds for the old-fashioned flower beds that he had designed, and that she knew of some half-deserted farms on the cross-roads where clumps of hardy chrysanthemums, that would bloom this autumn, might be had for a song, as well as mats of honeysuckle and myrtle.

As I watched her in the half light and saw the outline of her face backgrounded by the green vines,

and her dark hair and rich colouring brought out by the flowered organdie she wore, I began to realize that this young woman with few advantages save those that a warm heart nourished, had already become an influence in another's life; and as I thought of Lois's and Sukey's perseverance it did not seem as if their mother, who died worn out at thirty-five, had lived in vain, but that her hopes for them were blossoming.

A shout from Ian and an immediate exclamation of woe from both boys made us jump to our feet. The little raccoon had sprung lightly from Ian's shoulder to the railing, then upward to a giant sugar maple, and was disappearing among fence shadows toward woodland freedom, while Evan whistled back the dogs that were keen to follow and comforted the boys with the assurance that sooner or later each must foregather with his own, backed by the story of Mowgli and how, though reared in the open, the voice of his race called when he became a man.

* * * * *

When Susanna Crandon ignored the suit of the elderly missionary, and not only planned her own life but took in hand the affairs of her sisters as well, the Reverend Jabez made us a call without

Aunt Lot and evidently with a purpose in view, which, however, he suddenly, for some reason, chose to forget except by the implication of rambling quotations in which "The lost sheep of the house of Israel" and "The mammon of unrighteousness" were hopelessly mixed. But now that the garden school is an accomplished fact, and a thing of no little moment in the community, Reverend Jabez has not only seemingly altered his opinions but taken to visiting the Bacon farm with conspicuous and alarming frequency, saying to me with smug complacency one afternoon as I came upon him suddenly in turning the corner of the piazza where he sat being regaled with strawberries gathered by Lois, swimming in cream sent by Mrs. Jenks-Smith via Jane for the sisters' little larder, his sensual lips drawn back from teeth that gleamed more glassily than ever since their visit to the Bridgeton dentist — "Yes, Mrs. Evan, as you see, I am a frequent visitor at this abode, sacred as the birth-place of my first wife — the mother of my children, you know. It is pleasant and suitable for the patriarch to sit under the vine and fig tree in the cool of the day and be thus ministered to by the fruits of his loins!" which remark, under the circumstances, I thought very ill judged; and a

new fear for Sukey began to creep over me lest he intends leaving the vineyard altogether, being evidently year by year less appreciated in the misfit vocation into which the railway collision most unfortunately precipitated him. For to-day the ministry of every denomination calls for the best manhood,—best physically as well as mentally and spiritually,—to stem the human current, not the miserable bits of wreckage that have belittled real religion and those who seek authority by its influence with turned-up eyes and drawn-down lips. Then I wondered in what form Providence would interfere, as it certainly will, to keep this from coming about, whether via Aunt Lot or some new circumstance not yet visible on the horizon or perhaps even under way.

Meanwhile Sukey was radiantly happy. All the afternoons and long evenings were her own, and she and Lois walked, gardened, and sewed themselves into long periods of sisterly confidence and pretty shirt-waists, under hints from Jane, who, in spite of her down-trodden years of cooking and, as Martha Corkle puts it, “turning an apron three times until it was all edges, and then filling it in with the ends of the strings,” had most excellent taste in dress. No one would recognize the different articles of

Mrs. Jenks-Smith's overblown wardrobe of a few years before, as they appeared upon the girl, who not only had a waist quite in the right place, but good limbs as well that were rounding graciously under the freedom from paternal restraint and hard work.

It was Jane who suggested the simple but well cut gowns of blue and brown holland, with turnover collars and cuffs, in which Sukey looked so irresistibly and mischievously demure in school hours, and it was Jane who undid the painfully tight braids and tousled Lois's fine hair into a becoming wreath, so that as she sat on the porch working at Martin Cortright's copying in the afternoon, a harpsichord would have seemed a more fitting instrument for her fingers than the staccato typewriting machine. But Lois was a worker, not a dreamer, and the way she elucidated Martin's hieroglyphics, and knew by instinct whether he meant the two tipsy loops to be the figure three or eight, and certain other details, after experience with the usual slam-banger, filled his heart with rapture. The result being that this morning Lavinia Cortright came to me with her prettiest confidential air, and said :—

“Now, Barbara, if anything ever happens to change the Crandons' winter plans, I must rely upon you to let me know it, for though Martin will send Lois all

his work, and I would not for a moment say a word to upset that pretty home and sisterly combination, yet if there comes a chance I should so like Lois to make her home with us of winters. Yes, I know I said last spring that the plan of a resident secretary was impossible, but she is the one exception! She has a perception that to my mind outranks in value what is known as mental discipline or mere education."

Then Mrs. Truesdale's words came back to me.

Meanwhile Sukey has also plodded away at her photographic scheme, in which her artistic instinct (which I believe dwells in us all in some form) finds expression. And she develops and prints the rolls of film or plates intrusted to her with such patience and skill, saving a bit from this almost hopeless negative, and an odd corner from that, and mounting them in novel ways so cleverly, that far-away friends of the Bluffs and Country Club people have become her patrons. The work has assumed the proportions of a business, and her wares are spread on wall, mantel shelf, and in albums,—everywhere in the quaint north parlour with its blue and white delft paper and the lankness of the haircloth furniture hidden by rosebud chintz slips. On the door is a set of pictures of Sylvia Bradford's taking,—little Anne in her

various moods and one of Grandma Bradford feeding chickens, cut off abruptly, close behind the fence, to concentrate the light upon the face and shut off confusing details. Along the mantel shelf is stretched a large picture of the Vanderveer four-in-hand, framed also by Sukey's handiwork in russet leather straps, with buckles at the corners, while fastened in one corner of the mirror, so that by the odd conceit he seems to be riding out of the trees and sky reflected in it, is the portrait of a plainsman on horseback, one hand shading his eyes as if on the lookout for straying cattle.

"Yes, I know it is a deal of work," Sukey replied, when I cautioned her about letting her ambition run away with her caution and overdoing it, "but it is such a pleasure to have all those scenes and people come to visit one. A friend of Mrs. Vanderveer's is going to send me all her Norway rolls to develop this autumn and I've already a lot from Switzerland and Italy. It almost seems, Cousin Barbara, when I sit there in the dark, with only that red-eyed lantern winking at me, and rock the bits of film in the tray, until suddenly the image begins to come out of nothing and grow nearer and nearer until I make haste to stop it before it fades and passes away, as if I were travelling and watching all the scenes through a car

window, or else Aladdin was making magic with his wonderful lamp!"

Then I think I fully realized that a capacity for happiness, like Sukey's, is in itself a gift of genius.

* * * * *

It was Wednesday afternoon. Wednesday afternoon at the School Garden usually signified that the sixteen children who composed it went home immediately after the midday meal, but this day was gala, and Mrs. Jenks-Smith and Jane were coming to assist at a picnic in the orchard, to be given by the children to their parents in the form of five o'clock tea and raspberries, served by their excited little selves under the gnarled old apple trees.

The sixteen little gardens were painfully neat and the initials in pepper-grass pebbles, shells, or, in the case of two or three of these children of fortune, elaborate rustic work, were freed from overhanging vines or underbrush. Each plot had a centre of quick-growing vegetables, and an outside border of flowers where the common showy annuals were re-enforced by cuttings of geraniums, heliotrope, verbenas, and so forth, from the Bluffs gardens, whose generous growth covered the gaps left by seedlings that had been "observed" too much while in extreme youth.

The lettuce sandwiches were to be made of the

fruits of the soil. The slender white radishes were Peysey Vanderveer's *pièce de resistance*, for each child strove to contribute something ; and even now the sun being still high, the children, gathered under the trees to keep both clean and cool (one of the few rules of the garden was that no nurse-maids were allowed to remain during school hours), were decorating the table with big bunches of golden-haired black-eyed Susans, and the pagoda-shaped meadow lilies put in stone pitchers and jugs, or bordering the cloth with festoons of ground pine from the woods across the lane. Of course they fell over each other and Lois could have done it all herself in a jiffy, but this was their party, and the whole gist of the occasion was to make them, as far as possible, create the hospitality they were offering their friends, — not to buy, beg, or borrow it.

As three o'clock was indicated, as it had been for years, by the pump handle casting its shadow in a line across the length of the box-edged walk, Sukey, clad in her best blue linen, wearing a pretty garden hat of rough straw and daisies, came out the side door and going to the wall peered anxiously down the lane. For Mrs. Jenks-Smith and Jane had promised to come immediately after luncheon, bringing some extra cups and saucers, as well as a freezer

of ices of Pierre's best fashioning. As the Lady of the Bluffs was the first patron of her scheme, Sukey was doubly anxious to have her arrive in good season, and thus not only set the seal of her approval on the various arrangements, but also share the social responsibility of receiving the Bluff magnates, in which she had asked Sylvia Bradford and myself to join.

Not that Sukey quailed before these people — oh, no ; but the success of it all meant so much to her little scheme that her anxiety tightened something in her throat, though an added colour and the fact that she kept her hands tightly clasped before her were the only outward symptoms. Presently a cloud of dust, unusual in a partly grass-grown lane, appeared in the direction of the Bluffs cross-road.

“Here they come !” exclaimed Sukey to herself. “No, it's only a horse and a man riding it, — looking for cows, I suppose ; it seems as if all the lost cows in the county came through this lane !”

A turn, and the wind carried the dust across lots, revealing the figure on horseback to better advantage. Surely it was none of the neighbouring farm-hands, — far from it ! The man, about thirty, a tawny-mustached, sun-burned blonde, was clad in riding breeches and leggings, booted and spurred, the brim

of his soft felt hat tilted over his eyes. The horse was lean and wiry, of the Indian pony build, and the saddle of Mexican make.

As Sukey gazed in astonishment the rider came full tilt toward the wall and stopped so short that the pony almost sat on its haunches. Raising his hat, just enough for courtesy but not sufficiently to bare his head to the sun, the rider said : —

“Beg your pardon, but could you tell me where I am? For either I’m going round in a circle, or I don’t know my right hand from my left.”

“This isn’t anywhere in particular,” said Sukey, drawing back. “It is the old Bacon farm on the crossway between the Bluffs boulevard and the Ridge turnpike — we get our mail from Oaklands.” Then, seeing that he was indeed a stranger and the words conveyed no meaning, she added, “But where do you wish to go?” unconsciously answering one question by asking another.

“To a village called Pine Ridge,” said the horseman.

“It is six miles farther on. If you will ride along to the gate I will point you the way, but the sun shines in my eyes so that I cannot see the road from here,” Sukey continued.

With an apology for his thoughtlessness the rider

turned the corner, and, dismounting under the sugar maples by the gate, proceeded to wipe the lather from the pony's flanks with a handful of grass.

In a moment Sukey opened the picket gate and joined him. Turning quickly, and this time wholly removing his hat, she really saw his features for the first time, and gave a sort of gasp as she stood stock still, her eyes wide open and her lips, from which however no sound issued, forming a very round O.

"What is it?" asked the rider, in the voice and accents of a gentleman, but evidently embarrassed. "I hope I've not alarmed you. I'm not a highwayman in spite of the dust, I assure you."

"No, oh, no, it isn't that, but you see —" and Sukey shook her head as if to make sure that she was awake — "you are that negative of Mrs. Bradford's that I developed and printed, and you're stuck in the corner of the mirror in the north parlour," and Sukey, pleasure written in every line of her face, broke into a rippling laugh.

For a single moment the man thought that he had strayed into the retreat of a pretty lunatic, and then the truth flashed before him — the roll of films his chum had snapped off as he was leaving the ranch and which he had sent to Sylvia!



“‘What is it?’ asked the rider.”

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"Yes, I must confess to being that negative, for I am Sylvia Bradford's brother, Carhart Latham; I've ridden from New York to-day to visit her at Pine Ridge, and have lost my way. Pray, was I hard and slow to develop? Most people think me so, or did I 'come up' easily," he said, joining heartily in her laughter.

"You came up nicely," answered Sukey, now all the photographer. "I remember particularly because I did not know whether it would be a view or an animal or a person. It's all in the conditions and the temperature of the developer that makes a negative come out without either rushing or fogging," she explained earnestly.

"Ah, now I have it all!" he said, as if solving a mystery. "You are the young woman who teaches children to make dirt pies and all that. I've heard Mrs. Jenks-Smith exploit you in town, but not your name."

"It's Crandon — Sukey Crandon, — and now, Mr. Latham," said she, all of a sudden remembering the afternoon and its responsibilities, "if you take the next turn to your left and keep straight on, you cannot miss the Ridge; but—" as an idea struck her—"Mrs. Bradford is coming down here at four for tea. You see my school is giving a party to-day,

and if you care to wait—about—I—mean, she could show you the way back. Only you must excuse me, for the children's parents are coming, and I'm the schoolmistress, you know! Oh, but have you had any luncheon? I'm afraid not, for there isn't a decent place within miles about where you could have bought any."

"No, I've had no lunch—not that it matters—but couldn't you invite me to your party? I'm sure I should like it, especially if you put me in a class with the youngsters."

Her pleasure at the recognition, then her hesitation, free from the slightest trace of coquetry, yet blending with the ready thought of his comfort, touched Carthy Latham as nothing had done for years, and a hardness that had tugged at his heart-strings and kept his lips set and stern suddenly loosened.

"Do people in Wyoming ask other people—strangers—to whom they've never been introduced, to their parties?"

"Yes, always; and they may also go without invitation, but it can't be any worse for me to come to yours than to have been lodging all summer in the corner of that mirror in the parlour," he said mischievously, to try her.

"I have it," said Sukey, with an air of relief and ignoring his last words. She had been thinking rapidly. "Mrs. Jenks-Smith is coming over at any minute. Ride back along the lane and meet her 'bus and then come back with her and be introduced! Collins will rub your horse down, and you shall have a cold lunch on the back porch, a chance to brush up, and then you may come to the party!"

"Good work," called Latham, boyishly, preparing to remount and casting his eyes over the fence. As he did so he caught sight of something white that brought him to his feet again.

"Those things in there—for Heaven's sake! What are they—graves?" he ejaculated, pointing to the double line of even earth mounds.

"No, those are the children's gardens. Do they plant tomatoes, lettuce, and radishes on graves in Wyoming?" Sukey asked, going through the gate and closing it behind her.

"Tomatoes! I only saw flowers," he said, as, with a long, earnest look at the retreating figure, he re-tracked the lane; but Sukey, intent on her duties, was out of hearing.

* * * * *

Sylvia Bradford arrived before me, because father was late in bringing in the horses, and then lo and

behold! beside her was Carthy Latham, amid all the decorative feathers that fine human birds don of summer afternoons, wearing his riding clothes with the air of being perfectly at home in them and his surroundings, while Mrs. Jenks-Smith was playing the great lady with unusual tact, but assuming an expression, as she passed, that led me to think she had an idea in her head that she was aching to share with me.

After the spread, Latham led his pony, now rested and fed, down into the meadow and put him through his paces for the boys, holding one of the most venturesome upright in front of him in the saddle. In short he did not seem the same fellow who was so politely wooden that afternoon at Lavinia Dorman's, and over whom affectionate Sylvia often sighed as a misanthrope and woman-hater.

Presently, her duties as hostess over for the time, Sukey joined the spectators at the impromptu circus. Mrs. Jenks-Smith, in a becoming suit of black-striped gauze, flushed with her success as patroness, was everywhere at once, and suddenly pounced upon me where I stood alone for a second under the grape arbour, whispering dramatically at my cheek, between the nose and ear, "Look at Carthy

Latham! I met him in the lane and he begged me to bring him. I suspect he's met Sukey before, though Jane says not!"

A fact of civilization is that wherever a man and a maid meet, there shall possibilities arise to trouble the minds of the spectators; so I merely laughed carelessly, but a moment later the lightly sown idea took root. Could this be the form that Providence was going to take for the upsetting of Reverend Jabez's patriarchal calculations? Can Carthy Latham be the new circumstance appearing on the cloudless horizon of the west on his Indian pony? And for Carthy also, whose mother's hardness had hardened him toward women? Ah, but it is a blessed law of life that what one woman unties in carelessness another may bind in fidelity, and that love may wipe out bitterness. I wonder—?

How Evan would laugh at my fancy! But then he must remember that people wondered about us once upon a time, and then he did not laugh, he— I still wonder!

XVIII

THE RETURN

August 8th. These days the pond-lilies lie open well into the afternoon, as if too languid to heed the clock of flower language, wholly content merely to float time away fanned by the wings of dragon-flies that hover above and rest upon their buoyant leaves.

Two voices alone brave the hot noon : the harvest-fly, and the tireless red-eyed vireo who, as he dines, keeps up his agitated monologue without fear of contradiction.

In the city the gray pavements draw and absorb the fierce noon heat and fling it back in challenge to the night shadows long after the sun itself has set. In the parks and little breathing places the trees, hung with dust-heavy foliage, block the river breezes that strive to breathe greetings, laden with deep-sea messages to each other through the mazes of brick and stone, while the sumptuous lotus in the fountains make their surroundings but seem more arid as they drip with falling spray.

Under the trees, left growing here and there between the curb and sidewalk, carts are drawn up that the horses may enjoy their nose bags in the scanty shade, while their drivers, some sitting back against the trees, others lying prone on the pavements, likewise munch their coarse fodder or sleep in sweaty oblivion. On the shady side of thoroughfares the venders of fruit and lemonade ply their restless trade, and the rear of every ice-cart swarms with clamouring children.

The residential streets in the heart of the Whirlpool are well-nigh deserted. Drawn blinds close the windows and barricades silence the hospitable welcome of doorways. Here and there a caretaker has drawn a chair into the areaway and sits dozing over a paper, for in August every one leaves the Whirlpool who has either the money to ride or the strength to crawl away. Even the park-bench hobo braves the watchdogs and mosquitoes of the country to sleep under a hayrick. Yet in spite of the emptiness of certain quarters, others, belching their compressed population into the street as night draws on, maintain the general average.

The shop-girls possess their souls in pathetic patience, keeping their neat shirt-waist cuffs clean with paper covers, against the evening when either with a

male escort or in family groups of two and three they will take a trolley ride shoreward or perhaps test the assorted joys and sorrows of an excursion boat, and even the finery of summer is limp and withered.

But the day at least is endurable, because in the day one expects at all times to do and overcome. It is the time after the August sunset in the crowded town quarters that is appalling, when they would sleep and cannot, when they would rest and may not, for the whole air is hollow and annihilating as a vacuum, from which the overplus of tenement dwellers have sucked away the life-supporting force, and the voice of traffic is ceaseless as the wail of ailing childhood. God, but the poor of the earth are patient as the one whose image they wear, and this patience is patent of their origin and destination !

The Orient has its famous city of Dreadful Night, and so has the Occident, only less hateful in degree for that its sufferings are local and its feet are lapped by the flow of ocean and river that join in the Whirlpool that surges about it.

* * * * *

Awnings shaded the windows of the editorial rooms of *The Morning Despatch*; the men were, by common consent, coatless and vestless. At the first warm weather men always apologized when they even

removed a coat, and made a dash for it on the slightest pretext. In July they sometimes apologized, but did not put the coat on; and in August manners, coats, and vests all fell away together!

For a month past Neil Gordon had been at the office but four days in the week. Now he was away on his regular vacation in exchange with the assistant city editor, who was overseeing his work.

Ivory Steele's holiday had been due the first of August, and Gordon had made every arrangement that she should not only have the regulation period but an extension that was her due owing to her frequent work overtime. But Ivory had been difficult about the matter even to the verge of annoying Gordon, who, with all his soothing manner, was always just, direct, and to the point and disliked procrastination and sidling either in the mental or physical attitude.

Ivory had said that she did not feel the heat and preferred work to resting, that the mental so completely dominated the physical that if her mind was satisfied it meant rest to her body; but her looks belied her words, for a gray whiteness had obscured the rich ivory of her complexion and, though she was not always pale, an experienced eye would have known that the dark flush that came and went in her cheeks told of the touch of fever.

After arguing in vain for two days and always ending at the same barrier of "I prefer not to," Neil Gordon became nettled and courteously but firmly told her that he had arranged to dispense with her assistance for the month, and that he did not propose to have the fact of her remaining in the office all summer upon his conscience. He had once thought of asking Janet to have her at Oaklands for a week, but circumstances did not shape aright.

Then he drew a check for her month's salary in advance, and gave it to her with some little pleasure—to cover the real reason that he thought she might be pressed for money—about summer finery being perishable, closed his desk, and wishing her a pleasant holiday, shook hands cordially, seized his hat, and hurried to take his train for Oaklands.

That evening Ivory lay back on the lounge in the boarding-house room quite exhausted; the loosening grip of the mental had let the physical drop, and the poor, slender body was pitifully tired. Also Ivory was in a still rage. Neil Gordon had paid her and practically told her to go, as if she were merely an ordinary employee instead of one who carried his interests and reputation with her own. Carefully as she strove to guard her feelings, yet she was beginning to resent his lack of insight. Three months before,

when she parted from John Roberts, she had said to herself that her work and the seeing and cherishing her ideal in her heart would be sufficient. Now she fully realized that it was not enough, and at the same moment the working and the seeing with which she had consoled herself were withdrawn. That her anger was with herself did not make the pain less acute.

Staying in the great, lonely city without the daily necessity of work was impossible. Where could she go? For since noon the fatigue that she had pushed from her for days by almost refusing to sit down was becoming every instant more overpowering. A letter from her mother had lain on her desk since the evening before. Mechanically she took it in her hand and opened the envelope. By chance she had let it lie unopened, — but sometimes chance is subtle. Had she opened it the night before it would have been half read and shred into bits. Now circumstances had altered, and the half-hearted appeal for Ivory to come home and join her parents in taking a trip to the Adirondacks stirred a languid interest, her mother writing, "Your father has come to a time of life now when he needs a holiday, — his first since you went to college."

At the first reading she only thought of the matter in lieu of anything better. Then the words "His

first since you went to college" rang in her ears. That was very long ago — eight years.

Presently the word "Adirondacks" conjured up before her the picture of mountains and their silence, and she found the thought refreshing. Why not go? She had absolutely reached the point where to go home and be for a time with her father and mother would be an almost new experience, and therefore justifiable by her code. Of course there would be annoyances and drawbacks, but she had found few experiences free from them. Of the underlying pathos of it all she had no suspicion.

Then John Roberts's figure crossed her mental vision — no, he was to sail the first of August for the Vienna conference, and the first week was already past. There would be no danger of meeting him. Yet she was surprised to feel a certain disappointment in the certainty.

Yes, she would go to-morrow, and walk in upon them without warning — she hated to be met and fussed over, and have all the neighbours watching for her. Springing up, nerved by excitement, she opened the door of her closet and pulled out her trunk, — it was heavy and she panted under the exertion, and when she had dragged it to a convenient spot under the mantel shelf, she was trembling

from head to foot. Wondering why she was so easily spent, for though slender she was of a wiry, muscular build, she realized that she had not been out to dinner.

It was nearly eight o'clock; she would go around the corner to a near-by grocer's and buy some peaches and crackers,—she was too weary to dress and go to the usual restaurant table d'hôte. Coming in presently with her purchases and finding that the fruit was all that she could swallow, she began to pack her trunk in feverish haste totally at variance with her usual systematic way of doing everything.

When did the trains leave for Seneca? She hunted up a time-table from her desk, ignoring the fact that it was a year old. The first morning train was too early; if she took the ten o'clock and made the connection, she would reach Seneca in time for tea.

In an hour the packing was done, and ringing the bell she sent for the landlady and gave the necessary directions for having her trunk taken down in the morning and her room kept closed and unoccupied during her absence, paying for it in advance. The woman, good-hearted but harassed, assured her that everything should be cared for and began natural questions and congratulations about the unexpected holiday; but Ivory would not allow her

even the pleasure of gratifying innocent curiosity and shut her off by closing the door. In fact she was so exhausted that, meaning to undress, she sat a moment on the bed edge to think if anything had been forgotten, and the morning sun found her still dressed and asleep across the bed where she had fallen.

Soon, however, the street noises wakened her, and pulling herself together she looked about and began to realize the preparations of the night before; but everything danced before her as in a dream, eluding her grasp. Gradually she remade her toilet, and the touch of cool water partially drove the fog from her brain.

The little maid brought her breakfast as usual and wished her a pleasant trip. A sudden impulse seized Ivory, and, taking from its box a new summer hat the girl had once admired, she gave it to the astonished slavey, with the effect that she first laughed and then burst into tears, going down stairs with the hat held at arm's length and her head buried in her apron.

What was the matter? As she stood at the window waiting for the expressman, Ivory felt strangely as if she were bidding good-by to everything for which she had striven, even life itself. Her break-

fast, all but the coffee, remained untouched ; she was only thirsty, and the sight of food was nauseating.

Once in the street the morning breeze, not yet discouraged in well-doing, revived her, and she noticed gratefully that the sky was overcast. After buying her ticket through to Seneca and checking her trunk, she settled herself in the parlour car and opening a magazine, mechanically, laid it face downward in her lap and leaned back with closed eyes.

The hours went on unheeded. Those who looked at her saw only a young woman of the upper middle class, excusably tired by the heat, and possibly upset by the car motion.

The coloured porter was more practical ; at one o'clock he suggested luncheon.

Opening her eyes, Ivory's first consciousness was of burning thirst ; so she ordered iced tea and a sandwich, and managed to keep her eyes on the passing landscape until three o'clock, when she made the first of the two changes to branch roads. Immediately she became aware of the deficiencies of her time-table ; instead of a fifteen-minute connection, she must wait for two hours. The station-master suggested that she might like to take a hack and pass the time by seeing the view through the gap north of the town ; and she gratefully took his hint, for

the feeling was rapidly creeping over her that if she stopped moving she would not have the strength to go on again.

Two hours more of travel, — this time in a way train. Do the best she could, now that both connections were changed, instead of reaching Seneca at six it would be nearly ten o'clock.

In making the next change, she bought a biscuit and a glass of lemonade, and thus started on the last stage of her journey, having had no substantial food for twenty-four hours.

How her face burned! Bathing it with her wet handkerchief brought no relief; the people in the train seemed to be walking about head down, and a heavy brown veil that continually shifted separated her from them, through which John Roberts's face kept peering. She then realized that she was on the verge of tears, and checked them only by a superhuman effort.

At last Seneca was reached. When the roar of the train had died away, Ivory found her way with difficulty to the street and gave her trunk check to the first hackman who came up. He was gone but a moment, but short as the time was, Ivory's limbs were tottering with her slight weight.

"The trunk wasn't put off at the junction, miss," he reported; "it 'll not be here afore mornin', but

they'll see it reaches yer, all right. Where'll I drive yer to, miss?"

Ivory struggled with her fast-failing faculties. Where was she going? The street and number of the new house failed her entirely, though she did not realize it, and it was the address of the old house on the Hill Slope that she gave the driver, almost in a whisper.

"Yes, miss; it won't take no time to get there. You must hev had a terrible hot ride—thermometer's higher'n any time since '59," he said sympathetically, as he closed the door, figuring mentally to himself that this pretty young lady must be a friend of the doctor's sister, come to keep her company while her brother was away, for all Seneca knew where Dr. Roberts lived and that he had won a prize that meant much honour, and, as usual in a comfortable, neighbourly town, they took part of it to themselves.

Straight out to the country-side they went, and as the streets merged into roadways the deadly fatigue began to slip from Ivory. It seemed to be her first year at Barnwell, and not yet wholly weaned from home she was glad at her return.

The hack stopped; she got down lightly as if she trod on air and paid the man with some added word

of thanks, quite unusual for her, while he, driving off, was satisfied that the air had "chirked her up."

Swiftly she went up the walk and ascended the porch steps, letting her satchel and stray belongings drop into one of the piazza chairs. She did not pause to ring, — few doors were locked except after eleven o'clock on the Hill Slope, and it was now half-past ten.

Entering the door, she closed it softly and stood in the low, broad hallway, gazing about half satisfied, half perplexed ; for while some objects were familiar, others necessarily were not. Then she shielded her eyes with her hand and strove to recollect, but the fog in her brain was again rising higher and higher and threatening to envelop her.

* * * * *

Editha Roberts was sitting in the long west room that the doctor used for his study and which overlooked the sweep of hills. The windows were all open and a single shaded lamp was on the table at her elbow. It was too warm for either reading or sewing, and brother and sister were lounging and talking of their plans. She was to be married in October, for he would not hear of a delay on his account, and the moot question between them was



“She stood in the low, broad hallway, gazing about half satisfied, half perplexed.”

concerning a keeper for the house when six weeks hence he should return from abroad, his going having been delayed a week by a serious case that he did not think fair to put upon his colleague, Dr. Haweis, until the crisis had passed, and he now waited still longer for a desirable boat.

John Roberts had altered not a little during the past three months, but the change was one of poise rather than anything directly physical. A look of resolute will power had come into his face, and his whole bearing was decisive and alert.

"Did that vehicle stop, or was it merely passing?" asked Editha, carelessly, as one heeds every trifling sound when heat and night seem to accentuate the stillness.

"I did not notice," he replied, "but I think that I hear steps upon the porch. The front door has opened and closed," he added, lowering his voice, and putting the lamp out of the draft he went toward the hallway, closely followed by Editha. Parting the bamboo portières slightly he peered out, Editha clinging to his arm and looking over his shoulder.

This was at the moment when Ivory, struggling with memory, uncovered her eyes and looked about the entrance to her old home for the second time. Seemingly satisfied, she came forward with her old

gliding motion, her skirts trailing along and the drapery of her filmy white waist falling gracefully about her. Carefully unpinning her hat she laid it on the top of the open piano; and then something about the music piled in the rack caught her attention, and giving a low, meaningless laugh she paused again, steadying herself by the piano corner.

Editha was about to call Ivory's name, when her brother closed his hand over her lips and dropping the curtain whispered, "Not a word, not a sound; something has happened to her, something is the matter, she does not realize where she is." When he again parted the curtain Ivory was seated on the piano stool turning the music carelessly, then she gave a cry of terror and started back from the instrument; yet in a second, as if unable to go away, she reseated herself and her fingers fumbled with the keys.

Suddenly she struck a firm chord and glided into the swift surging accompaniment of the song that John Roberts knew so well — *The Song of the Soul* — that the woman sitting there had once sung from the heart, and at other times so belittled.

With painful effort she gathered her voice together, and for a moment it rang out clear with its capricious, mocking wildness: —

“ Folly and fear are sisters twain,
One covers her eyes ;
The other peopling the dark inane
With spectral lies ! ”

The accompaniment halted and ran out of key ; and when groping memory followed and led it partly back, the voice had crept down into the recesses of the parched throat and its accents, tense with a sort of terror, clung to the one unaccustomed verse that she never had sung before : —

“ Ah, the cloud is dark and day by day
I am moving thither :
I must pass beneath it on my way —
God pity me ! Whither ? ”

Wrenching herself as if from the grip of an unseen force that was making her prisoner, she left the piano and glided toward the stairs as if to go up ; but at the first step she tottered, clung to the newel post, and sank in a heap, her head pillowed by her arms, muttering unintelligibly.

Editha, whose first impulse toward Ivory had been one of indignation and reproach, was now all helpless pity and stood clinging to her brother's shoulder crying softly.

At the sight of Ivory's complete collapse, the mist of passion, love struggling with resentment, cleared itself from John Roberts's brain. He became at once

not only the physician facing illness to be alleviated, but a man facing a woman that he still loved but who was in a situation where she must be protected both from others and from the humiliation of herself.

His swift mentality for diagnosis told him that she was in the first gradual delirium of a fever, probably either brain or typhoid, that her presence in her old home was in no way connected with himself, but rather caused by the snapping of connecting links, the handiwork of the disease!

Again dropping the curtain he said rapidly to Editha in that self-contained, calm voice of his that, young as he was, made his patients lean on him as a tower of strength, — "Ivory Steele is very ill, there must be no fuss and no emotion. She is the daughter of our old friends — do not think of her now in any other connection — she believes that her parents are still living here! We must put her to bed while I send for them and call up Haweis. No, I shall not undertake her case except in the emergency until he comes. Which room did she occupy of old — yours? Then I will carry her there, but remember, under no circumstances must she know that I am or was in the house! I shall sail day after to-morrow as I first planned." And Editha understood, yet marvelled greatly at his strength.

Crossing the hall, John Roberts spied a travelling veil that had fallen from Ivory's hat ; picking it up, he wrapped it loosely round her head and lifting her in his arms without the slightest effort carried her to his sister's room, followed by Editha. He need not have feared recognition, however, for body and brain had given way together, and for several minutes they were both too busy with restoratives to heed externals.

Half an hour later Roberts, opening the front door to admit Dr. Haweis, whom the telephone had brought, found the satchel and other things in the porch chair. These he took up to Editha, and gathering a few necessary articles for himself in a suit case came downstairs again, drawing Dr. Haweis into the study and closing the door.

When it opened again the two men walked the length of the hall in silence, turning to face each other at the hall door with a grip of hands. John Roberts went out to summon the parents, for that was not a matter for the telephone, and a nurse also.

It was midnight when the old people arrived, bringing with them the various articles John Roberts had directed. Mrs. Steele, all mother once more, ministering to a child whom sickness had brought again within her comprehension and range of ministry, quiet and self-restrained, set about ar-

ranging the room, as far as might be, to give it a familiar air that would disarm suspicion should Ivory at any time lapse to consciousness; but poor Mr. Steele, the shrewd man of business success and civic uprighteousness, sat trembling miserably in the hall with streaming eyes, until Editha, freed by the nurse from her duties, found time to comfort him, and after a while coaxed him to go to bed in his old west room, where he lay looking at the familiar outline of an elm against the sky.

Then Editha went to pack her brother's trunk, that was to follow him to the hotel by the station before the town awoke next morning.

* * * * *

The illness was typhoid fever ("walking typhoid" they called it), bred of pressure beyond the strength and the unwholesome living that welcomes the vagrant germ with wide-open door. It was weeks before this house of body and brain, by force of care and love, was swept and garnished anew. Ivory Steele did not die, but though she existed it was long without definite comprehension, so much greater had been the peril of mind than of body.

One day it came about that some ray of sunlight from within cleared the mist that had tricked her with phantoms of mirage, and, looking toward the

vine-screened window with intelligent eyes, she saw her mother sitting in her well-worn Shaker rocker, sewing. Then, giving a long, free breath of content, that is interpreted a sigh, she turned, and cheek under hand, fell into natural sleep.

The doctor and nurse called this healing vision "passing the crisis." And all unbidden Editha Roberts cabled the news of it across the water.

* * * * *

August 29th. Janet and Neil Gordon, with the Cortrights and Sylvia and Horace Bradford, supped with us to-night. It is father's birthday, and as he has always kept a young heart toward the home festival, I spread the table in the garden, where, as the twilight curtain was drawn in the west, the light cloud draperies in the east fell away before the full moon. I must not forget to record that the breeze, mistaking the season, played Hallowe'en tricks with the rows of candles that garnished the three-story birthday cake which had been Jane Crandon's offering, and that in consequence many an uninvited moth went home from the party with the sad experience of singed wings that surely follows the playing with all sorts of fire, while the enthusiasm of the boys, and the dog family that gathered about unchidden, gave the real touch of youth and

abandon that is necessary to carry off outdoor festivals.

After a time of general repartee and merriment, the conversation gradually resolved itself to dialogue, and I heard Neil Gordon say to Lavinia Cortright: "Miss Steele? Oh, she is progressing slowly; it is the end of the third week, and the crisis came yesterday, Haweis wrote me. It chanced, oddly enough, that the doctor in charge is a college chum of mine, and at her father's request he wrote me of her illness, and he says that his patient was much run down, and even if all goes well it will be months, perhaps a year, before she can take up her work. Of course I'm sorry, doubly so, for she was a capital assistant—seemed to have a sort of insight of my methods and wishes, yet never presumed, in fact was of a strangely cold and reserved temperament. I'm equally surprised and glad to know that her people are more than well fixed, and able to care for her. I never could fathom the breaking of her engagement to young Roberts, a fellow in every way to be admired, but then she may be difficult. Why a woman of her intensely feminine personality, in spite of efforts to deny and suppress the same by pure force of logic, should have so needlessly stepped out into the world, with neither the goad of genius

or necessity to push her, passes my comprehension."

Chancing to catch Horace Bradford's eye I asked him the question that had always before occurred to me when he was absent — "Why did you once finish a sentence of Ivory Steele's by asking her if she was a woman errant?" Then I told him of my first sight of her in the studio eight months before. "Now," I said, "please also explain exactly what you mean by your use of the words 'woman errant,' for the term has haunted me of late, and the people to whom it is applied seem to be so widely different. Is it a woman who works, who goes out to get her living, or is it a trite name for a pose?"

It chanced to be a moment of general conversational lull when I spoke, and all waited for Horace's answer. This rather embarrassed him, as well as the seeming difficulty of putting his meaning into the form of exact words. Turning toward father, he said:—

"It is a subtle condition that I mean, rather than a pose. As I caught the term from you, Dr. Russell, — will you not interpret it, for it most certainly contains no stricture upon the workers of life?"

"No, not upon *work*," said father, rising slowly, and leaning on the back of his chair, as he looked in-

rospectively toward the moonlight and then into the deep shadows of the lane walk, stretching his limbs cramped by long sitting, meanwhile, "for love and work are our justification for existence, coupled with the faith that makes either possible. Yes, '*Fide, amore, labors,*' that is the positive trinity of life. It is not the doing, but the way of it that marks the distinction to me. The woman errant, God help her, it seems to me, is she who either from choice, hazard, or necessity seeks a cause outside the protecting wall of her natural affections!"

* * * * *

Up started the dogs and bounded baying toward the lane. There was no sound of voices, but as the wind was from that direction it came as speech to them, and in a moment they turned back with lingering glances and a sweeping of tails that I knew signified they were acting as escort to some one known to them.

Nor was I wrong. Presently two figures emerged into the light and seeing the group about the table stood as if petrified, hands to sides for all the world like the wooden figures of Mr. and Mrs. Noah in a toy ark.

The images were Sukey Crandon and Carthy Latham, whose visit to his sister, begun five weeks

before, had not yet ended; their intention had evidently been to gain the house by the back way, having seemingly forgotten or not knowing about the party. In a moment at least partial presence of mind returned to them and they came lamely forward, Latham making a remark about the suitability of the evening for a walk and Sukey wishing father "Many happy returns" in a fluttering sort of way that deceived nobody, though why Evan should have shaken Carthy's hand so hard and so long that I expected to see his arm come out at the socket, I did not at once understand; but I now see that men have a more subtle comprehension of each other than we think, possibly because they keep to direct motives.

To add to my bewilderment Sylvia jumped up, overturning her chair, and slipping behind Evan possessed herself of her brother's other hand. Finally Sukey, getting control of her tongue, jerked out, "Mr. Latham is going away to-morrow, and he—I—that is—he thought he would come down to tell you—to tell you good-by!" (Why she had come also was every moment becoming more evident, though not through words of either.) By this time Sylvia had her arms around her brother's neck, and glancing in that quarter and seeing no immedi-

ate assistance available, Sukey continued helplessly, "You see I like hearth fires, and he does, too!" Then a general shout and uproar drowned her voice completely, and Carthy, escaping from between Evan and Sylvia, crossed the path, and, with an arm about her waist, brought her straight to me.

After a moment of excited congratulation I asked, thinking, perhaps, of Lavinia Cortright's rapid entrance to matrimony, "Sukey, are you thinking of going to the ranch — next week?"

"Oh, no, he's coming back again before winter — his father wants him — and you see there aren't any more logs for hearth fires at the ranch. I'd just as lief — but — why, Cousin Barbara, it wouldn't be keeping things together if — just at the start — I left my sisters — widows!"

Then merry Sukey cast herself into my arms, and there shed the delicious tears of pent-up newly discovered womanhood.

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